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 Saiga shokunin burui 彩畫職人部類
 [Illustrations of different types of craftsmen], Edo, 1770

THE THREE KINGDOMS AND WESTERN JIN: A HISTORY OF CHINA IN THE 3RD CENTURY AD ~ I

史 Rafe de Crespigny

1. THE FORMATION OF THE THREE KINGDOMS (189-220)*

The Successes of Cao Cao

It is not often in history that a major change can be dated so precisely as the fall of Han. On the evening of 24 September 189, the general Dong Zhuo 董卓, camped outside the capital city of Luoyang 洛陽, saw flames rise up against the sky, as eunuchs and gentry officials fought one another for power. He led his army forward to deal with the disorders, and as he did so the power of the imperial government was ended.¹

When Dong Zhuo entered the capital, he did so without formal authority but he faced no legitimate opposition, and his seizure of power turned the political structure of the state back to its roots. Despite the metaphysical and political theories of the time, the essential factor in government had been the military authority of the emperor. The founders of the dynasty, first Emperor Gao 高 of Former Han and then Emperor Guangwu 光武 of Later Han, had gained the throne by victory in civil war, and their descendants had ruled in succession just because, in the last resort, the armies would obey imperial commands. Now, however, that authority was gone. On 28 September Dong Zhuo deposed the young emperor Liu Bian 劉辯 and placed his half-brother Liu Xie 劉協 upon the throne.² Within a few weeks there was open rebellion and the whole of eastern China was cut off from the new government at Luoyang.

The impetus for the opposition to Dong Zhuo, however, came as much from personal ambition as from any desire to restore the power of Han. Leaders of the rebels in the east included Yuan Shao 袁紹 and Yuan Shu 袁術,

This work has been prepared as a chapter for the second volume of *The Cambridge history of China*. I present it here in preliminary form because I believe there is room for a general survey of the third century, which saw the transition from a long-unified empire to a comparable period of disunity and conflict, and because I know that I shall benefit from the comments and criticisms of others. I emphasize that the piece is designed as a discussion of events. I refer occasionally to matters of literature and philosophy, but there are other scholars expert in those fields, and I have sought only to provide a historical background for their analysis. The work appears in two sections: the first contains parts 1 and 2, dealing with the foundation of the Three Kingdoms and the rival empires; Section II, planned for the next issue of *East Asian History*, will contain part 3 and deal with Western Jin.

* The chief sources in Chinese for the history of the end of Han are chapters 59–68 of the *Zizhi tongjian* [ZZTJ] of Sima Guang (1019–86) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, /OVER

/1956), which draw information chiefly from the two standard histories: *Hou Han shu* [HHS], compiled by Fan Ye (396–446) and others (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965), annals 10 chapters, biographies and accounts of non-Chinese peoples 80 chapters, treatises 30 chapters incorporated from the *Xu Han shu* of Sima Biao (240–306), modern commentary by Wang Xianqian, *Hou Han shu jijie* (HHSJJ) (Changsha, 1915); and *Sanguo zhi* [SGZ] by Chen Shou (233–297) with commentary [PC] compiled by Pei Songzhi (372–451) citing many parallel works (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), 65 chapters, modern commentary by Lu Bi, *Sanguo zhi jijie* (SGZJJ) (Mianyang, 1936). The relevant chapters of ZZZ are translated by de Crespigny, *The last of the Han* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1969).

¹ There are biographies of Dong Zhuo (d. 192) in HHS72/62 and SGZ 6/Wei 6. For an account of events at Luoyang in September 189 see ZZZ 59, 1900–4; de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, pp. 51–7; B.J. Mansvelt Beck, “The fall of Han,” in *The Cambridge history of China*, vol. 1, The Ch’in and Han empires 221 BC–AD 220 [CC 1], pp. 341–7.

² The account of the brief reign of Liu Bian (176–190), ‘Young’ Emperor of Later Han, is attached to the end of the annals of his father, Emperor Ling 靈, in HHS 8.

Liu Xie (181–234) is known to history by his posthumous title of Emperor Xian 獻. The annals of his reign are in HHS 9.

³ Biographies of Yuan Shao (d. 202) are in HHS 74A/64A and SGZ 6/Wei 6; those of Yuan Shu (d. 199) are in HHS 75/65 and SGZ 6/Wei 6. Biographies of earlier members of the Yuan family, who had held the highest offices of state since the time of Emperor He at the end of the first century, are in HHS 45/35. On the position of such families and their influence among local élites see Patricia Ebrey, “The economic and social history of Later Han,” CC 1, pp. 608–48, at 636–43.

⁴ The biography of Cao Cao (155–220), posthumously honoured as Emperor Wu of Wei, is in SGZ 1/Wei 1.

⁵ Han Fu 韓復, Governor of Ji province which controlled the northern part of the North China plain, put the question at first in simple and realistic terms: “Shall we support the Yuan clan or the Dong family?” His advisers, however, insisted that he had no such choice, and Han Fu came under Yuan



who controlled a network of influence based on the high official status of their clan and their wealth in landed property,³ and men such as Cao Cao 曹操, not so well regarded, but with sufficient family resources to raise his own army.⁴ Many regular officials of the provinces were reluctant to break the peace, but local pressure was overwhelming and those who did not join the rebels were swiftly eliminated.⁵ And there were, of course, any number of fighting men and adventurers, some of them with pretensions to an official position, who took advantage of the growing turmoil to seek power and profit on their own initiative.

In 191, the army of Sun Jian 孫堅, under the command of Yuan Shu, drove Dong Zhuo from Luoyang west to Chang'an 長安, and in 192 Dong Zhuo was assassinated by his former body-guard Lü Bu 呂布.⁶ The central government fell into complete disorder and played no further part in the affairs of the rest of the empire, and the alliance in the east collapsed into anarchy and warfare across the whole of the plain.

In this first stage of the wars, there was a multitude of contenders for success or survival. From his base at Ye 鄴 city in Ji 冀 province, Yuan Shao extended his power north of the Yellow River, while further south, between the Yellow River and the Huai, there was a tense and vicious conflict between Yuan Shu, Cao Cao, Tao Qian 陶謙 the Governor 牧 of Xu 徐 province, Lü Bu from the north-west, and Liu Bei 劉備, a man of poor family who yet claimed descent from the rulers of Former Han.⁷ Yuan Shu was driven south of the Huai in 193, Tao Qian was destroyed



/Shao's influence. A few months later, Han Fu was brushed aside and Yuan Shao took his place as Governor (HHS 74A/64A, 2376-8).

More drastically, as Sun Jian (155-192), Grand Administrator 太守 of Changsha 長沙, came north to join the rebellion, he killed his nominal supervisor, the Inspector of Jing province, and his formal colleague, the Grand Administrator 太守 of Nanyang 南陽. For his biography see SGZ 46/Wu 1, at p.1096, and de Crespigny, *Generals of the south: the foundation and early history of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1990), pp.112-17.

⁶ See ZZTJ 60, 1933-9; de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, pp.89-98. Biographies of Lü Bu (d. 199) are in HHS 75/65 and SGZ 7/Wei 7.

⁷ Biographies of Tao Qian (d. 194) are in HHS 63/53 and SGZ 6/Wei 6. The biography of Liu Bei (161-223), first sovereign of Shu-Han, is in SGZ 32/Shu 2.

⁸ One major contingent of Cao Cao's early army was a group of remnant 'Yellow /OVER

in 194, and Liu Bei surrendered two years later. As Cao Cao's power spread, the ranks of his army filled with family connections, gentry allies, soldiers of fortune and surrendered rebels,⁸ and by 198, when he captured and killed Lü Bu, he had no further rival in the southern part of the North China plain.

Of those early opponents, Tao Qian was an appointed official who could claim no strong local support against a determined enemy, while at the other end of the scale Lü Bu and Liu Bei were soldiers of fortune who relied for success entirely upon their military prowess and reputation. They were not regarded as men of good social position, they did not have notable support among the gentry, and they failed to attract a substantial body of advisers and administrators to their service. Their power, therefore, was brittle and no match in the longer term for a competent opponent who could also offer some form of stable government. So a leader without background was wise to take service with a man of broader authority, and it was for this reason that Sun Jian, who had obtained a large army in 189 but who came from an insignificant family of the south-east, accepted Yuan Shu as his chief and fought thereafter under his orders.

Sun Jian was killed early in the civil war in a campaign against Liu Biao 劉表, the Governor of Jing 荆 province, and in 193 Yuan Shu was driven south into Yang 揚 province. From his new capital at Shouchun 壽春, in present-day Anhui, he made some attempt to regain the ground he had lost north of the Huai, and in 197 he assumed title as emperor of a new dynasty. Yuan

Figure 1

Warriors on horseback: rubbings from a tomb of the Han period at Zhengzhou in present-day Henan

/Turbans', a peasant mass from Qing 青 province in present-day Shandong, whom he persuaded to surrender and join his forces in 192.

⁹ During Han the city was called Xu. The name was changed to accord with a prophecy that the empire would be restored at Xuchang.

¹⁰ This campaign, which led to the battle at White Wolf Mountain, is discussed in de Crespigny, *Northern frontier: the policies and strategy of the Later Han empire* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1984), pp.407–13.

¹¹ The same system of warfare is described for the Ming period by Ray Huang, "The Lung-ch'ing and Wan-li reigns, 1567–1620," in *CC* 7, part 1, pp.511–84 at 579–80, when armies were sent against Nurhachi in Manchuria in the early sixteenth century.

Shu's claim, however, was rejected even by his allies, and every hand turned against him. Abandoned by almost all his followers, he died in the summer of 199. Though the empire had become one huge battleground and the emperor himself a powerless puppet, the imperial title was still reserved to the house of Liu.

In 196 Emperor Xian made his escape from the squabbling warlords of Chang'an, and with a combination of luck and imagination, Cao Cao took him under his protection and control. Playing the hand far more carefully than had Dong Zhuo, Cao Cao established the formalities of an imperial court at present-day Xuchang 許昌 in Henan,⁹ and he justified his actions as a loyal minister of Han.

In the summer of 200, after months of planning and preparation, Yuan Shao and Cao Cao met in a long-drawn-out campaign in the vicinity of the small city of Guandu 官渡, south of the Yellow River near present-day Kaifeng. Cao Cao's forces were heavily outnumbered, but they held their defence for more than a month, when a fortunate raid against the enemy's supply lines broke the morale of Yuan Shao's forces and drove them in disorder to the north. Two years later, Yuan Shao died, his sons quarrelled about the inheritance, and Cao Cao took advantage of the confusion. In 204 he captured the city of Ye, and by 207, after a brilliant campaign beyond the frontier against the non-Chinese Wuhuan 烏桓,¹⁰ he had established control over the whole of the North China plain.

Cao Cao was a fine general and a remarkable politician, and he has acquired legendary status in Chinese tradition. To appreciate the reality of his achievement, however, we must recognize the pattern of conflict within which he gained his success.

The ramshackle system of military recruitment had considerable effect upon techniques of warfare and upon the structure of politics for generations to come. Despite theories and formalities of ranks and grades, the basic fighting unit was the group which had gathered or been conscripted about some leader, and each unit was accompanied by a mass of camp-followers, wives and children, cooks and prostitutes, peddlers and gamblers, and a few who specialized in caring for the sick and wounded. At the core of command, each chieftain was supported by a group of companions, close relatives or old friends and comrades, on whom he could rely completely and who served as a focus for the larger body of his troops.

In these circumstances, success in combat depended very largely upon the personal courage of the individual commander, the degree to which he could encourage his men to follow him, and his ability to rally them to his standard even after serious defeat. Though accounts of the time exaggerate the heroism of the leaders, it does appear that the pattern of battle required a direct attack by small body of men, who sought to 'break the enemy line' and throw the opposing body of troops into disorder and flight.¹¹ The officers who could embark on such an enterprise were

certainly brave and physically skilful, but they were also likely to be violent and egotistical, and they were not necessarily competent administrators or thoughtful counsellors.

The troops these men commanded were unwieldy and uncertain. As authority depended primarily upon prestige and personality, no individual could exercise real control over more than a few hundred or perhaps a thousand men, and any substantial force – of, say, thirty thousand men – had to be ordered through a long hierarchy of command, from the leading general down to individual units. With limited means of communication there were constant problems of discipline and supply, and a military mass of this order was extremely difficult to manoeuvre in the face of battle, while even the most minor set-back could produce serious loss of morale and a swift collapse. And though the question is often ignored, there was real danger of disease amongst such a host of men gathered together. To a considerable degree, armies of that time carried with them the seeds of their own destruction.

In more general, even philosophical, terms, there has been some debate on the nature of Cao Cao's social or class position, and his significance as representative of middle and lower land-holders and gentry opposed to the members of old and powerful clans represented and championed by Yuan Shao. Indeed, it is true that the perception of social status as a source of authority was sometimes more important than practical matters, for the dominance of gentry families in the political society of Later Han had brought a general expectation that local and national leadership was reserved to men of lineage. On the other hand, while family background could determine whether a man had sufficient status to maintain an independent command and attract useful administrative support, it is too simplistic to base an analysis purely on notions of class conflict. Many contemporaries regarded the ambitions of the Yuan as excessive and deluded, and Cao Cao was, sensibly, more cautious. The Cao and their kinsmen of the Xiahou 夏侯 family were parvenus compared to great lineages such as the Yuan, but Cao Cao's father had been Grand Commandant 太尉, the most senior position in the imperial administration,¹² his first recruitment of troops was based upon family resources, and he had sufficient standing to seek and achieve an independent position.

Once he had entered the contest, Cao Cao's great achievement was to gain and hold the loyalty of a vast number of different commanders and their followers, and to maintain his disparate forces as a coherent military power. This was surely due to his personal ability, and when he had established his authority south of the Yellow River it was on the basis of that regional command that he mounted his opposition to Yuan Shao and other rivals. In the political and military manoeuvring which culminated in the decisive battle of Guandu, there was discussion of Yuan Shao's claim to great family and of Cao Cao's talent as a leader, but this was more in the nature of

¹² Cao Cao's father, Cao Song 曹嵩 (d. 193), had been adopted by the high-ranking court eunuch, Cao Teng 曹騰.

¹³ The biographies of Gongsun Du (?150–204) and Gongsun Kang (d.c. 220) are in *SGZ* 8/Wei 8. On Gongsun Du and his successors see K. H. J. Gardiner, "The Kung-sun warlords of Liao-tung 189–238," 2 parts, *Papers on Far Eastern History* 5 (Mar. 1972): 59–107, and 6 (Sept. 1972): 141–201.

¹⁴ On the situation in the north at this time see de Crespigny *Northern frontier*, pp.345–54.

¹⁵ On the rebellion in the north-west see Gustav Haloun, "The Liang-chou rebellion 184–221 AD," *Asia Major*, n.s. 1 (1949–50): 119–38; de Crespigny, *Northern frontier*, pp.146–52.

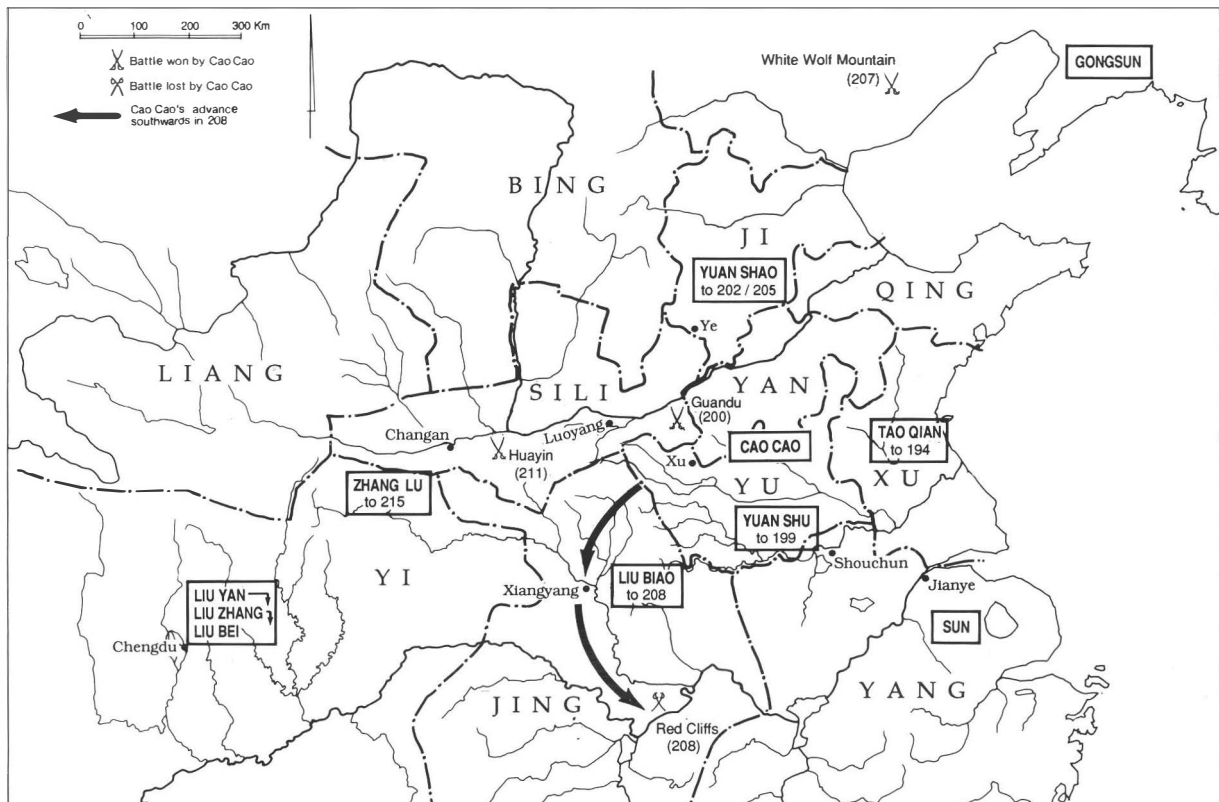
¹⁶ Biographies of Liu Yan (d. 194) are in *HHS* 75/65 and *SGZ* 31/Shu 1. That of Liu Zhang (d. 219) is in *SGZ* 31/Shu 1.

propaganda than a class confrontation: the essential conflict was between the warlord north of the Yellow River and his rival to the south, and Cao Cao gained the victory because he organized his resources more effectively and commanded his army with greater skill.

By the end of 207, after his conquest of the territory formerly controlled by Yuan Shao, Cao Cao had established government over half the population of the empire, and he controlled the heartland of China. From this central position he was faced by a scattering of opponents, none of them in close alliance and each one weaker than himself. In the north-east – the southern part of Manchuria – Gongsun Du 公孫度 had formed a separate state, and he was succeeded by his son Gongsun Kang 公孫康 in 204.¹³ North across the frontier and in the region of present-day Shanxi, imperial control had largely given way to a medley of non-Chinese tribes, in which the remnants of the Xiongnu 匈奴 state struggled for survival against the erratic power of the Xianbi 鮮卑.¹⁴ In Liang province, present-day Gansu, rebellion which had broken out in 184 had been restricted to that territory,¹⁵ but the confusion became worse after the collapse of the government at Chang'an following the death of Dong Zhuo. To the west, in present-day Sichuan, Liu Yan 劉焉, the Governor of Yi 益 province appoint-

Map 1

Warlords at the end of Han



ed in 188, had been succeeded by his son, Liu Zhang 劉璋, in 194.¹⁶ Immediately to the north of Liu Zhang's territory, Hanzhong 漢中 commandery on the upper Han River in present-day southern Shenxi was under the theocratic government of Zhang Lu 張魯, leader of the Five Pecks of Rice 五斗米 sect and recognized by the present-day Taoist church as the third patriarch of the Celestial Masters 天師.¹⁷

Immediately after his campaign to settle the north, however, Cao Cao turned his attention southwards against Liu Biao, Governor of Jing province, and the young warlord Sun Quan 孫權 who controlled the lower course of the Yangzi.¹⁸

At the beginning of Later Han, the critical phase in the civil war had been the struggle for command of the North China plain, and when the future Emperor Guangwu had gained that territory it was only a matter of time before the rival warlords on the periphery fell under his control. In 208, as Cao Cao embarked on his campaign in the south, it was generally expected, even by his opponents, that the same pattern would be followed once again. By a combination of changed circumstances and the fortunes of war, however, the unity of the empire was not restored so quickly; it was indeed very long delayed.

The Red Cliffs Campaign (208)

We have noticed Sun Jian, sometime Grand Administrator of Changsha and later general in the service of Yuan Shu. After his death on campaign against Liu Biao, his forces were largely taken over by Yuan Shu, but a few years later, in about 194, his son Sun Ce 孫策, then aged eighteen, took service with Yuan Shu.¹⁹ He was given command of some of the soldiers who had followed his father, and was sent to join operations south of the Yangzi.

The Sun came from Wu 吳 commandery in present-day Zhejiang, but they were not a leading family of that region, and Sun Jian had made his career as a fighting soldier. In similar fashion, Sun Ce seized his position in the south-east essentially through his own remarkable military skill. By 198, at the age of twenty-three, he had declared independence from his former patron Yuan Shu, now a usurping emperor, and he held control of Danyang 丹陽, Wu and Kuaiji 會稽 commanderies, a swathe of territory stretching from present-day Nanjing past Hangzhou Bay, and including some outposts on the coast of Fujian. From this base Sun Ce extended his power westwards, and by 200 he had taken Yuzhang 豫章 commandery about the present-day Poyang 鄱陽 Lake in Jiangxi, and Lujiang 廬江 north of the Yangzi.

In this series of campaigns, Sun Ce had to deal not only with the semi-regular troops of rival administrators, but also with bandits, with local self-defence groups, and with powerful clans which had gathered their own private armies. In many respects the warfare was as much a matter of local

¹⁷ The biography of Zhang Lu is in *SGZ* 8/Wei 8. Among several discussions on the development of popular Taoism at this time, one may observe the work of Henri Maspero, "Le Taoïsme," *Mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l'histoire de la Chine* (Paris: Civilisations du Sud, 1950); Paul Michaud, "The Yellow Turbans," *Monumenta Serica* 17 (1958): 47–127; Werner Eichhorn, "Bemerkungen zum Aufstand des Chang Chio und zum Staate des Chang Lu," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientalforschung* 3 (1955): 292–27, "T'ai-p'ing und T'ai-p'ing Religion," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientalforschung* 5 (1957): 113–40, and "Allgemeine Bemerkung über das Religiöse in alten China," *Oriens Extremus* 26 (1979): 13–21; Rolf A. Stein, "Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the second to seventh centuries," *Facets of Taoism: essays in Chinese religion*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 53–81.

¹⁸ The biography/annals of Sun Quan (182–252), posthumously titled Great Emperor of Wu, is in *SGZ* 47/Wu 2.

¹⁹ The biography of Sun Ce (175–200) is in *SGZ* 46/Wu 1.

²⁰ In 193 Huang Zu had commanded the northern defences of Liu Biao against an attack of Sun Jian, in which campaign Sun was killed. As a result, the Sun family conducted a personal vendetta against him, while maintaining a strategic interest in the territory he controlled.

²¹ There are biographies of Liu Biao (d. 208) in *HHS* 74B/64B and *SGZ* 6/Wei 6, followed by brief accounts of his sons Liu Zong and Liu Qi (d. 209).

²² The biography of Guan Yu (d. 219) is in *SGZ* 36/Shu 6..

rivalry as a formal struggle for power, and in 200, soon after his conquest of Poyang, Sun Ce was ambushed and assassinated by former retainers of a defeated rival from Wu.

Sun Ce was succeeded by his younger brother Sun Quan, at that time eighteen years old. The warlord state, however, was sufficiently well established to survive the immediate crisis, and Sun Quan swiftly confirmed his authority in the territory left him by his brother. By 203 he was expanding further to the west, and early in 208 he destroyed Huang Zu 黃祖, the subordinate commander of Liu Biao in the territory around present-day Wuhan on the middle Yangzi.²⁰

On the eve of Cao Cao's campaign against the south, therefore, Sun Quan controlled the Yangzi below Wuhan, the Poyang region, and Hangzhou Bay. He had, however, no strong position north towards the Huai, while much of the hill country in the south was inaccessible, inhabited by non-Chinese Yue 越 people and by refugees from official levies or the disturbances of war. On the other hand, whereas Sun Quan's power was only a fraction of that which Cao Cao could mobilize, his navy on the Yangzi was experienced and effective, and had established its local superiority.

Cao Cao's first opponent was Liu Biao, Governor of Jing province.²¹ Liu Biao had been appointed to that position by the government of Han under the control of Dong Zhuo, but since the early 190s, when he repelled the attack of Sun Jian and Yuan Shu, he had played no substantial role in the civil war of the north. The territory formally under his control extended south from his capital at Xiangyang 襄陽 down the Han River to the Yangzi, and then south again up the valley of the Xiang, but in practice his authority beyond the Yangzi was tenuous, and his eastern flank was under threat from the forces of Sun Quan.

In the autumn of 208, moreover, Liu Biao died. Through political manoeuvring, the succession passed to his younger son Liu Zong 劉琮, leaving the elder Liu Ji 劉琦 discontented and rebellious. As Cao Cao approached, Liu Zong's supporters urged him to surrender, and indeed he had no real alternative. Cao Cao took over the province, made his own appointments to the local government, and gathered many of the leading officials and scholars at Liu Biao's court into his own service.

There was, however, a party of opposition, to some degree centred around Liu Ji but inspired chiefly by Liu Bei who had fled from the north some years before. Liu Bei attempted to rally the dissidents and establish a line of defence on the Yangzi. He was, however, chased, caught and heavily defeated by Cao Cao, and he turned for support to Sun Quan.

It was not an easy decision. Liu Bei and Liu Ji were in exile and retreat, and although Liu Bei's lieutenant Guan Yu 關羽 had retrieved much of the Jing province fleet from the Han River,²² Cao Cao had occupied the naval

base at Jiangling 江陵 on the Yangzi. As he brought his army and his new fleet eastwards in pursuit, he also sent messengers calling Sun Quan to surrender.

Sun Quan was uncertain of his best course of action, and there was considerable debate at his headquarters. He decided, however, to send troops forward under the command of Zhou Yu 周瑜,²³ to join Liu Bei and Liu Ji and to test Cao Cao's strength. If their defence were unsuccessful, he could expect to withdraw most of his men and would still have a reserve army with which to negotiate terms.

The allies met Cao Cao's forces at the Red Cliffs 赤壁, on the Yangzi between present-day Wuhan and Yueyang, and for a few days the two groups faced one another across the river. The men from the north had already taken part in a long campaign with several forced marches, they were not accustomed to the southern waterways and marshlands and, we are told, there was sickness in the camp. Some of the army and all of the fleet had formerly served Liu Biao, and many must have been undecided about their allegiance. For his part, Cao Cao probably regarded the operation as an armed reconnaissance: if he was successful in defeating the allies and driving them to separate surrenders, so much the better; if not, he could withdraw and await another occasion in the future.

After Cao Cao's first attack was driven back, the wind changed against him and Zhou Yu sent in an attack with fireships. In the warfare of that time fire was a common weapon, and when used in the right circumstances could cause large-scale destruction. Whatever preparations Cao Cao may have made against this threat, he was compelled to abandon his position and retreat, and the allies enhanced their victory with tales of slaughter. The battle at the Red Cliffs has become one of the most celebrated in Chinese history; it is the theme of several plays and poems, and the centre-piece of the great historical novel *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 [Romance of the Three Kingdoms].²⁴

It is very likely that the account of Cao Cao's defeat has been exaggerated, and literary tradition has embellished the story out of all proportion, but later events proved the engagement to have been one of the decisive battles in Chinese history. As Cao Cao retreated he left garrisons behind him, but in the following year Zhou Yu's army captured Jiangling, and the southerners thereafter faced no serious threat to their naval control of the Yangzi. Cao Cao and his successors made several attempts to break the river defences, but they could not match the strategic position or the tactical skills of their enemies. Neither side may have realized it at the time, but the Red Cliffs campaign turned out to be the last chance for many years to reunite the empire, for it was control of the middle Yangzi which spelt the difference between survival and surrender in the south.

²³ The biography of Zhou Yu (175–210) is in *SGZ* 54/Wu 9.

²⁴ The story of the Red Cliffs occupies chapters 43–50 of *Sanguo yanyi*. There are a number of plays on the theme in the traditional repertoire of Chinese drama, and a modern composite work, "Battle of the Red Cliffs," was prepared in 1958, at a time of renewed interest in the career and historical significance of Cao Cao.

The major historical account of the campaign is in the biography of Zhou Yu, *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1262–3, with commentary by Pei Songzhi quoting the late third-century work *Jiangbiao zhuan*. There is a chronicle history of the campaign in *ZZTJ* 65, 2081–94; de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, pp. 256–70. For a recent discussion see de Crespigny, *Generals of the south*, pp. 263–75.

The Struggle for the Middle Yangzi

²⁵ The biography of Zhuge Liang (181–234) is in *SGZ* 35/Shu 5.

²⁶ That campaign, which culminated in the battle of Huayin 華陰, is discussed in de Crespigny, *Northern frontier*, pp.163–5.

²⁷ The biography of Liu Fu (d. 208) is in *SGZ* 15/Wei 15. On the *tuntian* system of Wei see pp.25–7 below.

²⁸ The biography of He Qi (d. 227) is in *SGZ* 60/Wu 15, and that of Lu Xun (183–245) in *SGZ* 58/Wu 13.

²⁹ The biography of Lü Meng (178–219) is in *SGZ* 54/Wu 9.

³⁰ The annals/biography of Cao Pi (187–226), Emperor Wen of Wei (acceded 220), is in *SGZ* 2/Wei 2.

Though it does not appear to have had any direct effect upon the course of diplomacy, war or politics, we should note that in this year, 217, a great pestilence was recorded throughout the empire, with many deaths (*HHS* 9, 389, and *HHS* 107/17, 3351). It was the last recorded of the many that had afflicted China since the time of Emperor Ling in the 170s and 180s.

With the fall of Jiangling, Cao Cao's territory in the south was restricted to the Han River, with Xiangyang as his centre of defence. Sun Quan, as chief of the allies, naturally expected to profit from their success, but while his attention was concentrated on his own position in the east and an unsuccessful sortie northwards across the Huai, Liu Bei and his chief adviser, Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮, seized the commanderies of the Xiang river basin²⁵ and established a dominant position in the southern part of Jing province. In 210, Zhou Yu died, leaving Sun Quan with no-one of comparable authority to take his place. He was compelled to transfer the territory of Jiangling to Liu Bei, retaining for himself no more than the region about Wuhan.

In 211, Cao Cao turned to the north-west, broke the back of a warlord coalition in the Wei valley and reoccupied the territory around Chang'an.²⁶ Faced with this threat to his north, Liu Zhang invited Liu Bei to come to his assistance in Yi province, first against Zhang Lu in Hanzhong, and in due course against Cao Cao. Liu Bei accepted the invitation, but one year later he picked a quarrel with Liu Zhang and turned against him. In 214 Liu Zhang was compelled to surrender, and Liu Bei took over his territory.

During this period Cao Cao and Sun Quan engaged one another in the south-east, but Cao Cao's forces had no success against Sun Quan's position on the Yangzi, while Sun Quan was unable to break the line of the Huai; in particular, Cao Cao's administrator Liu Fu 劉馥 established agricultural garrisons about Shouchun and Hefei 合肥, and the settled peasant militia gave long-term stability to the defence of the region.²⁷ Further south, in campaigns against non-Chinese people and the refugees or renegades in territories now forming part of present-day southern Zhejiang and Fujian, Sun Quan's officers, notably He Qi 賀齊 and Lu Xun 陸遜, began a process of conquest and colonization which increased the territory of the state and added considerably to the human resources that could be taxed and recruited for corvée service and war.²⁸

When Liu Bei seized power in Yi province, however, Sun Quan turned his attention once more to the middle Yangzi and demanded a greater share of territory in the basin of the Xiang. Apart from the resentment with which he had watched his formerly weaker colleague gain territory in the west, it was clear that the resources he currently commanded were not sufficient to maintain long-term defence against the north.

In 215, Sun Quan's officer, Lü Meng 呂蒙, was sent to seize the southern commanderies of Jing province.²⁹ Liu Bei's general, Guan Yu, brought an army in counter-attack, and the rival warlords agreed on a new settlement, with the Xiang River as the boundary between them. Both were concerned about the threat from the north, and Liu Bei was also distracted by the situation in Yi province, where Cao Cao's attack from Chang'an across the

Qin Ling divide forced the surrender of Zhang Lu in Hanzhong and opened the way for a direct attack on Liu Bei.

For the time being, however, Cao Cao was chiefly concerned with the organization of the territory now under his control, with the suppression of internal plots against his authority, and with the consolidation of his power as the dominant figure at the refugee court of Han. Chancellor 丞相 of the empire since 208, he received the title Duke of Wei 魏公 in 214, and in 217 became King of Wei 魏王, appointing his eldest son Cao Pi 曹丕 as heir apparent.³⁰ Cao Cao's major military activity in this period consisted of one more attack against Sun Quan's position on the lower Yangzi, but although he compelled Sun Quan to make formal surrender and acknowledge him as king, the diplomatic coup had no real effect upon the military relationship of the two sides, nor upon Sun Quan's freedom of action.³¹

Far more important were the events of 219. At the beginning of that year, after a long campaign of stalemate, Liu Bei defeated and killed Cao Cao's general, Xiahou Yuan 夏侯淵, in Hanzhong.³² Cao Cao brought reinforcements in an attempt to rectify the damage, but he could not regain the territory and was compelled to retreat across the Qin Ling divide. Liu Bei's borders being thus secured against the north, in celebration of the victory he proclaimed himself King of Hanzhong.

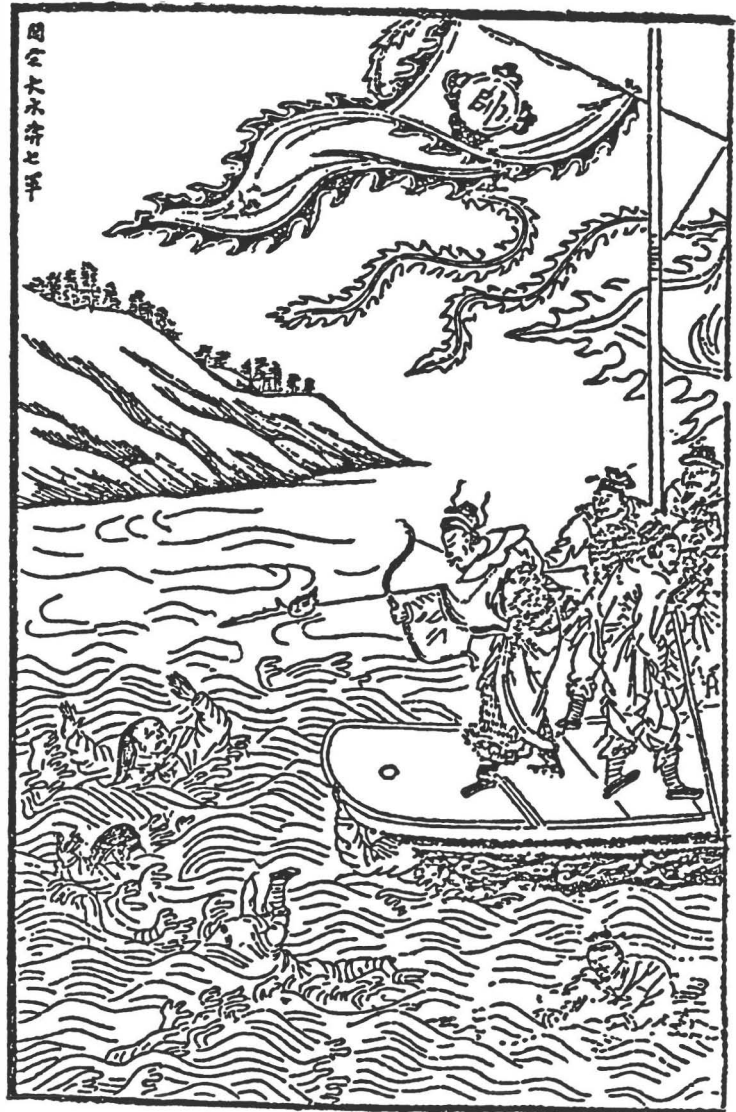
To the east, the enemies of Wei sought to take advantage of Cao Cao's misfortune in Hanzhong. Sun Quan made another unsuccessful attack against Hefei, but Guan Yu on the middle Yangzi presented a far more serious danger. From his base at Jiangling he attacked up the line of the Han River, and was fortunate to encounter heavy summer rains and flooding. One of Cao Cao's armies, caught in the open, was washed away, and Guan Yu brought his ships to the walls of Fan 樊 city, near Xiangyang 襄陽, the last obstacle in the way of an advance north into Nanyang and the heart of Cao Cao's power. The gar-

³¹ SGZ 1/Wei 1, 49; SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1120; de Crespigny, *Generals of the south*, pp.383-4.

³² The biography of Xiahou Yuan is in SGZ 9/Wei 9.

Figure 2

Guan Yu attacks Xiangyang in 219, and destroys Cao Cao's defence forces in the floods: a seventeenth-century woodblock print



³³ The biography of Cao Ren 曹操 (168–223), commander of the garrison at Fan city, is in *SGZ* 9/Wei 9, and that of Yu Jin 于禁 (d. 221), the field commander defeated and captured by Guan Yu, in *SGZ* 17/Wei 17.

³⁴ The biography of Lu Su (172–217) is in *SGZ* 54/Wu 9.

³⁵ On the abdication of Emperor Xian, and the claim to succession by Liu Bei see Mansvelt Beck, "Fall of Han," *CC* 1, pp.355–6, 369; Carl Leban, "Managing heaven's mandate: coded communication in the accession of Ts'ao P'ei, AD 220," *Ancient China: studies in early civilization*, ed. David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuei Tsien (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), pp.315–41.

rison in Fan was isolated and outnumbered and their fortifications were eroded by water, but they held out for three months until Guan Yu himself was attacked and destroyed.³³

Until this time, despite the incident of 214, Sun Quan and his chief commander in Jing province, Lu Su 魯肅,³⁴ had agreed that their best policy was to maintain the alliance with Liu Bei rather than face Cao Cao alone. Sun Quan, however, was not satisfied with the territory he had acquired, and was concerned that his nominal ally in the west might soon become as much a threat as his enemy in the north. When Lu Su died in 217, Sun Quan appointed Lü Meng, who had served as a personal agent for him in the past, to take his place, and though they continued to deal diplomatically with Guan Yu, they were looking for some opportunity to act against him.

In the autumn of 219, as Guan Yu was committed to the attack up the Han River and the siege of Fan, Lü Meng prepared a secret invasion and struck westwards along the Yangzi against Jiangling. The surprise was complete, Guan Yu's position collapsed in ruins, he himself was killed and the greater part of his army surrendered. Cao Cao's position in the Han valley was restored, while Sun Quan held all the territory east of the Yangzi gorges.

At the beginning of the following year, 220, Cao Cao died aged sixty-six *sui*. He was succeeded by his son, Cao Pi. In the winter, on 11 December 220 by Western reckoning, the new ruler of Wei received the abdication of the last emperor of Han and proclaimed his accession to the Mandate.³⁵ Six months later, on 15 May 221, Liu Bei in Sichuan made his own rival claim as emperor of the continuing house of Han—his state is generally known as Shu-Han 蜀漢 after an ancient name of that region.

For the time being, Sun Quan accepted the continued suzerainty of Wei and recognized Cao Pi's new honour. In exchange he received enfeoffment as King of Wu, but his chief concern was to hold the northern state in benevolent neutrality while he sought to deal with the inevitable attack from Liu Bei, seeking revenge for the destruction of Guan Yu and the reconquest of the territory he had lost in Jing province. In this, Sun Quan was successful, for Cao Pi was new to power and to the usurping title, and could not afford to turn too ostentatiously against his own feudatory.

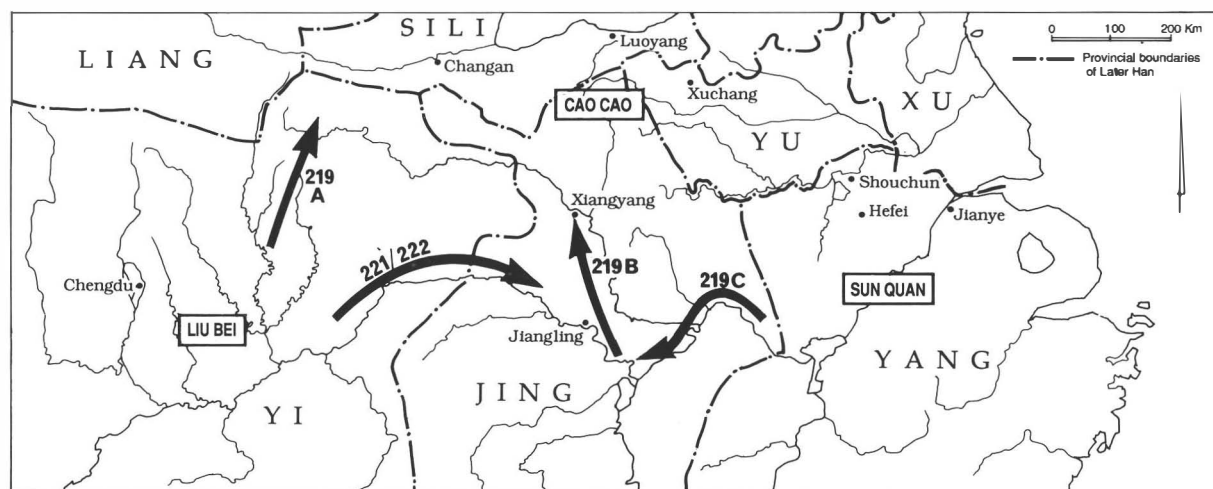
The attack from Shu against Wu came at the end of 221, and in the spring of 222 Liu Bei arrived to take command of operations. Lü Meng, Sun Quan's commander against Guan Yu, had been ill at the time of that campaign and died soon afterwards, and Sun Quan appointed his son-in-law and close confidant, Lu Xun, a man of good gentry and official family, to take responsibility for the defence. Against the advice of his subordinates, Lu Xun waited until Liu Bei was fully committed along the Yangzi below the Gorges, but in the sixth Chinese month, at the end of the summer, he made a series of attacks with fire on the flank of Liu Bei's extended positions, and the army of Shu-Han was broken. Liu Bei made his escape to Bodi 白帝

(‘White Emperor’) city, near present-day Fengjie in Sichuan, and died there the following year.

After the destruction of Guan Yu in 219, the defeat of Liu Bei in 222 confirmed the control of Jing province by Sun Quan, and he wasted little time in renouncing his fealty to Wei; he failed to send the hostages he had promised, and when Cao Pi came south to enforce the pledge, Sun Quan’s armies defied him with success on both the middle and the lower Yangzi. As sign of his independence, Sun Quan announced his own reign-title, and in the winter of that year, the beginning of 223, completing a brilliant series of diplomatic manoeuvres, he re-negotiated peace and friendship with the government of Liu Bei.

In military terms, the division of the empire of Han between three rival states was complete. There were individual warlords and rulers on the perimeters of the former empire, but the essential boundaries had been drawn. In the west, the victory of Liu Bei in Hanzhong had brought the upper Han valley under his control and set the lines of battle in that area along the Qin Ling divide, south of the valley of the Wei. On the middle Yangzi, Jing province of Han, any major possibilities of manoeuvre were ended: Shu-Han was restricted to the west of the Gorges while Wei and Wu shared a hostile, but largely static, frontier about the lower Han. In the east, Cao Cao’s agricultural garrisons, and the consistent failure of Sun Quan’s sorties against Hefei and Shouchun, confirmed the grasp of Wei along the Huai, but Sun Quan’s naval power on the Yangzi was never seriously threatened, and between the two lines of defence there stretched a desolate no-man’s land.

Map 2 *The decisive campaigns, 219-222*



219 A Liu Bei takes Hanzhong

219 B Guan Yu attacks Xiangyang

219 C Liu Meng destroys Guan Yu

221/222 Liu Bei is defeated by Lu Xun

2. RIVAL EMPIRES (220-265)*

* The major Chinese history of this period is *ZZTJ* 69–78, which draws its information chiefly from *SGZ*, from the additional sources quoted in *SGZ* PC and from the *Jin shu* (*JS*) compiled by Fang Xuanling (578–648) and others, 30 chapters (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974). The relevant chapters of *ZZTJ* are translated by Achilles Fang, *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms*, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952 and 1965).

³⁶ Though it is only a question of translation and nomenclature, we should recognize that 'Three Kingdoms' is not an appropriate rendering of the Chinese phrase *sanguo*, for at no time did all three rulers of the separate states hold the title of 'king' (*wang* 王) simultaneously: Sun Quan obtained the title 'King of Wu' only after Cao Pi and Liu Bei had proclaimed themselves emperors in 221, and he took the imperial title for himself, in formal rivalry with the other two, in 229. On the rendering of the title *wang* as 'king' or 'prince' see n.95 below.

³⁷ The figures of Former Han, dated 2 AD, are presented in chapters 28 A-C of the *Han shu* by Ban Gu (32–92) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962); those of Later Han, for the years around 140, are in *HHS* 109–13/19–23. Both texts list commandery units (with their population figures) and counties of the empire; in *HHS*, commandery units are arranged by province.

The treatises of *HHS*, compiled by Sima Biao in the third century as part of his *Xu Han shu*, were later incorporated into *HHS*; see Hans Bielenstein, *The restoration of the Han Dynasty*, 4 parts, *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* [BMFEA] 26 (1954), 31 (1959), 39 (1967), and 51 (1979), part 1, pp.12, 16–17. On Sima Biao's work see also B. J. Mansvelt Beck, *The treatises of Later Han: their author, sources, content and place in Chinese historiography* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989).

The figures are discussed by Bielenstein, "The census of China during the period 2–742 AD," *BMFEA* 19 (1947): 125–63, in which he points out the movement and colonization from north to south. See also his "Wang Mang, the restoration of the Han dynasty, and Later Han," *CC* 1, pp.223–90 at 240–2, 271–2.

Hitherto, we have considered the division of Han largely in terms of the military geography which determined the frontiers of the three successor states. We must appreciate, however, that the very emergence of these three 'kingdoms' was in many respects an unexpected development.³⁶ In earlier times, the brief interludes of civil war after the end of Qin 秦 and the fall of Wang Mang 王莽 had been followed by the swift reconstruction of a new government for the whole of China, and though the second century of Later Han had seen much discussion concerning the Mandate of Heaven, it had been generally accepted that the house of Liu should be revived or replaced, not that its inheritance would be divided. In many respects, the most interesting question about the end of Han is not why the dynasty fell, but why the unified empire was not restored. Any full answer to this question requires more than simple discussion of the chances of politics and war. We must consider the nature of the states which emerged from the ruin of Han.

Wu and the South

At the beginning of the first century AD, during the civil war which followed the fall of Wang Mang, the rulers of the south had offered no substantial resistance to the victor in the north, and at the end of the second century, during the troubles and turmoil which followed the fall of Han, Sun Ce owed his initial success to the natural defences of the river and the weakness of his immediate northern neighbour, Yuan Shu. By the time of the Red Cliffs campaign, however, the state of Sun Quan was strong enough to hold off a direct attack from the north.

The territory then controlled by Sun Quan – the commanderies of Yuzhang, Danyang, Wu and Kuaiji – had contained less than two million people at the end of Former Han, but in the middle of the second century AD their number was assessed at more than three million. This increase in the Chinese population south of the Yangzi was a critical factor in the division of the empire after the fall of the Han dynasty, for these human resources, under a competent warlord government in that strategic situation, were in themselves sufficient for survival.

The growth of population in this region was part of a general trend during Han, and the demographic change may be traced in census records preserved from the beginning of the first century and the middle of the second century AD.³⁷ At the time of the census recorded in the treatises of *Hou Han shu*, the registered population of the empire was a little less than fifty million individuals. Of this total, the southern parts of Jing and Yang provinces, later controlled by Wu, contained some seven million, and Jiao 交 in the far south had perhaps one and a half million. Numbers were affected by changes on

the frontiers, by the toll of civil war and by migration from one region to another, but on the basis of those Later Han records the population of the territory of Wu was one-sixth that of the former empire; the northern state of Wei could claim four times that number – two-thirds of the old empire.

In this situation, although the early success of Sun Quan's state was based on the demographic changes of the Later Han period, its survival depended on energetic expansion of the territory and the number people under its control. This consideration gave an urgency to the movement into Jing province, culminating in the destruction of Guan Yu in 219 and the successful defence against Liu Bei in 222, while at the same time the government of Wu extended its influence into the far south.

Jiao region of Later Han occupied present-day Guangdong and Guangxi, together with the Red River delta and the coast of Vietnam as far south as Hué. It was first brought under the control of China by the conquests of the First Emperor of Qin at the end of the third century BC, but the fall of Qin allowed the *émigré* Zhao Tuo 趙佗 to establish his independent state.³⁸ The province was reconquered by the armies of Emperor Wu of Former Han at the end of the second century BC, and Emperor Guangwu's general Ma Yuan 馬援 restored the authority of Later Han,³⁹ but growing weakness in the central government during the second century had resulted in the outbreak of a number of local disorders and permitted the development of considerable local control. Towards the end of the century, Shi Xie 士燮, leader of a family of Chinese descent, established personal hegemony throughout the region. His capital, Longbian 龍編 near present-day Hanoi, was a major trading centre, he himself was admired for his authority and his scholarship, and as the splendour of his court was celebrated, it became a place of refuge from the warfare of central China.⁴⁰

For several years the leaders in the north had other things to occupy them. After 200, however, Shi Xie appears to have relinquished close control of the eastern part of the province (present-day Guangdong), and there was some conflict between Cao Cao, now dominant in the north, and Liu Biao of Jing province. Each party sent nominees for positions of local authority, and Cao Cao allied himself directly with Shi Xie.

In 210, following the death of Liu Biao and the defeat of Cao Cao at the Red Cliffs, Sun Quan appointed his officer, Bu Zhi 步騭, as Governor.⁴¹ From his base at Panyu 番禺, present-day Guangzhou (Canton), Bu Zhi established relations with Shi Xie, while Shi Xie sent tribute and hostages to Sun Quan. Now more than seventy years old, he was evidently content with a limited, if profitable, role in the Red River delta, and although Vietnamese tradition records him as 'King Si',⁴² he made no attempt to emulate the political achievement of Zhao Tuo and the separate state of Nanyue four centuries earlier.

³⁸ On Nanyue 南越 see the accounts in chapter 113 of the *Shiji* of Sima Qian (146–c. 86 BC) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), 2967–78, and in *Han shu* 95, 3847–59; also Keith Weller Taylor, *The birth of Vietnam*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), pp.23–7, and Ying-shih Yü, "Han foreign relations," in *CC* 1, pp.377–462 at 451–3.

³⁹ Yü, "Han foreign relations," *CC* 1, p.454.

⁴⁰ The biography of Shi Xie (137–226) is in *SGZ* 49/Wu 4. For a discussion of his career see Taylor, *Birth of Vietnam*, pp.73–4; Jennifer Holmgren, *The Chinese colonisation of Northern Vietnam: administrative geography and political development in the Tongking delta, first to sixth centuries AD* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1980), pp.72–7; de Crespigny, *Generals of the south*, pp.340–53.

On Longbian as a centre for overseas trade in Later Han see Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and expansion in Han China: a study in the structure of Sino-barbarian economic relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), pp.178–9.

⁴¹ The biography of Bu Zhi (d. 248) is in *SGZ* 52/Wu 7.

⁴² See Edward H. Schafer, *The vermilion bird: Tang images of the south*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p.99. The name Shi Xie is transcribed in Vietnamese as Sĩ Nhiếp.

⁴³ The biography of Lü Dai (161–256) is in SGZ 60/Wu 15.

⁴⁴ On the trade to the south at this time see Wang Gungwu, "The Nan-hai trade: a study of the early history of Chinese trade in the South China Sea," in *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31,2 (1958): 1–135 at 16–34. Embassies from the three states, Linyi 林邑, Funan 扶南, and Tang-ming 唐明, are recorded in SGZ 60/Wu 15, 1385. On Linyi, a newly independent state on the southern frontier of China, see Rolf A. Stein, "Le Lin-yi: sa localisation, sa contribution à la formation du Champa et ses liens avec la Chine," *Han-biue: Bulletin du Centre d'Etudes Sinologiques de Pékin* 2, 1–3 (1947): 130–47; Kuwata Rokurō, "Nichinan Rini ni tsuite" [On Rinyū and Linyi], *Bulletin of History* (Imperial University of Taihoku [Taipei]) 7 (1942): 3–46. On Funan see Paul Pelliot, "Le Fou-nan," in *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême Orient* 3 (1903): 248–303; Kenneth R. Hall, *Maritime trade and state development in early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), pp. 38, 48–68. On Tangming see Stein, "Lin-yi," p. 131.

⁴⁵ The text of Sun Quan's proclamation is preserved in SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1135–6 PC quoting Wu lu.

For a summary of the question of legitimate succession to Han see Mansvelt Beck, "Fall of Han," CC 1, pp. 373–6; on the particular position of Wu see de Crespigny, *Generals of the south*, pp. 448–58.

In 220, Bu Zhi was succeeded by Lü Dai 呂岱,⁴³ who confirmed the position in Nanhai and Cangwu commanderies and extended his influence over present-day Guangdong and Guangxi. When Shi Xie died in 226, Lü Dai was ready to remove the last vestiges of his power. Pressing against the formal position of the Shi clan, he forced a quarrel and arrived at the Red River with an army and a fleet. When the sons of Shi Xie surrendered, Lü Dai had them executed and sent their heads to Sun Quan. His authority was confirmed along all the southern shore as far as present-day Cambodia, the sea trade into south-east Asia was peacefully maintained, and the prosperity of the entrepôt in northern Vietnam was now taken over to the advantage of Wu.⁴⁴

With the acquisition of this territory in the far south, Sun Quan obtained a source of notable wealth, and he also now secured his frontiers to the west and north. When Liu Bei died in 223, the government in Shu-Han, now controlled by the regent Zhuge Liang, confirmed the arrangement of peace and alliance, and though Cao Pi made several attacks on the line of the Yangzi, he was compelled each time to withdraw. In 226 Cao Pi died, and chief military attention shifted north-west to the frontier against Shu-Han along the Wei valley in present-day Shaanxi. In this period of stability and prosperity, Sun Quan, on 23 June 229, assumed for himself the imperial title.

In the context of traditional Chinese history, the claim is an eccentric one. The Cao family could assert that they held the greater part of the old empire and that their succession was legitimated by the abdication of Emperor Xian, while Liu Bei in the west claimed to represent the true imperial clan. Sun Quan had no such justification; his territory was on the fringes of the empire, and he had earlier accepted his title as king of Wu, and his calendar, from the usurping Wei. Sun Quan based his claim upon two predications: that the imperial position, vacated by Han, had not been filled by any worthy successor, and that his own accession was justified by the virtue of his government – in particular by his concern for the people. He dismissed the claims of Wei by describing the Cao family as criminal usurpers, and without specific reference to the claim of Liu Bei, stated simply that the fortunes of Han were ended, and the claim to succession had thus become irrelevant.⁴⁵

No traditional historian has accepted Sun Quan's claim to the Mandate. Much of the formal argument is based upon the incongruity of the regnal calendar, overlapping with Wei at the beginning and with Jin at the end, but it is, in any case, difficult to regard the imperial pretensions of Wu as very much more than a façade. The ministers and generals of Sun Quan were given titles from the official hierarchy of Han, and his capital became a centre of culture and wealth, but the essential structure of government was based on an alliance of powerful local families under the hegemony of the Sun clan, with civilian authority subordinated very closely to military power.

Sun Quan did attempt to expand his empire beyond his immediate territory; he received emissaries from Funan and other countries of the south,

he re-established a Chinese presence on Hainan island, he sent an expedition to Taiwan and possibly also to the Ryūkyūs; and he sought to establish an alliance with the Gongsun warlords of Liaodong in southern Manchuria. None of these initiatives, however, achieved real success, and the later military history of Wu was not impressive.

Despite several attempts, the armies of Wu were unable to break through the defences of Wei along the Huai. There were two occasions, in 255 and 257, when the city of Shouchun was seized by rebels against the political dominance of the Sima family in Wei, but the southerners could provide no useful assistance and in each case the city was recaptured and the northern position confirmed.⁴⁶

For the most part, the strategy of Wu was defensive, with garrisons and naval bases along the line of the Yangzi. After some indecision, Sun Quan established his capital at Jianye 建業, present-day Nanjing, which provided a centre for the control of the lower Yangzi. Defence of the middle Yangzi and the lower Han was based on the new city of Wuchang, downstream from the present metropolis of Wuhan, with a military government of wide independent power. For the most part, the traditional Han hierarchy of provinces, commanderies and counties was adequate for local administration, but on the frontier territory with Wei and Shu-Han there were also area commanders (*dudu* 都督) to maintain defence along the Yangzi.⁴⁷

After a government of more than fifty years, Sun Quan died in 252. His long reign had provided welcome stability, but it also brought difficulties for his successors and misfortune on his death. His eldest son and heir apparent, Sun Deng 孫登, had died in 241.⁴⁸ The next surviving son, Sun He 孫和, was appointed to replace him, but that candidacy was bedevilled by factional feuding. In 250 Sun He was deposed, and the elderly Sun Quan was persuaded to pass the succession to his youngest son, the seven-year-old Sun Liang 孫亮, under the guardianship of Zhuge Ke 諸葛恪.⁴⁹

This was a recipe for further intrigue and instability. In 253, eighteen months after the death of Sun Quan and following a disastrous attack against Hefei, Zhuge Ke was assassinated by the order of Sun Liang under the influence of Sun Jun 孫峻, a distant cadet of the imperial family. When Sun Jun died three years later, his cousin Sun Lin 孫林 succeeded to the dominant position at court.⁵⁰ In 258, Sun Liang, now in his mid-teens, sought to rid himself of the over-powerful minister, but was himself dethroned and replaced by Sun Xiu 孫休, sixth son of Sun Quan and some twenty-two years old. A few months later, Sun Xiu arranged a successful coup against Sun Lin and took power himself.⁵¹

The government of Sun Xiu was not particularly effective, and his death in 264 coincided with the surrender of the state of Shu-Han to Wei. In that period of emergency, Sun Hao 孫皓, son of the former heir apparent Sun He, and aged in his early twenties, was chosen as an adult ruler who might restore the fortunes and energies of the state.⁵² He achieved, however, only limited

⁴⁶ See also pp.34–5 below. The biographies of the rebel generals Guanqiu Jian (d. 255) and Zhuge Dan (d. 258) are in *SGZ* 28/Wei 28. On the course of operations around Shouchun see Fang, *Chronicle* 2, pp.190–6, 259–64, 290–4.

⁴⁷ The title *dudu* appeared in a variety of applications during the civil wars at the end of Han, sometimes designating an administrative officer (e.g. *SGZ* 56/Wu 11, 1309 PC quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*), sometimes a subordinate commander in a large field army (e.g. *HHS* 74A/64A, 2391). Under the government of Sun Quan in Wu, a *dudu* held military command over one area of the frontier and was normally subordinate to a *da dudu* ('area commander-in-chief'). The Wei and Jin arrangement was similar, though more closely associated with provincial administration.

⁴⁸ The biographies of Sun Deng (209–241) and Sun He (224–253) are in *SGZ* 59/Wu 14.

⁴⁹ The annals/biography of Sun Liang (243–260) are in *SGZ* 48/Wu 3. The biography of Zhuge Ke (203–253) is in *SGZ* 64/Wu 19. Zhuge Jin (174–241), father of Zhuge Ke, whose biography is in *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, was elder brother of Zhuge Liang, the great minister of Shu-Han.

⁵⁰ Fang, *Chronicle* 2, pp.134–7, 240. The biographies of Sun Jun (219–256) and of Sun Lin (231–258) are in *SGZ* 64/Wu 19.

⁵¹ The annals/biography of Sun Xiu (235–264) are in *SGZ* 48/Wu 3.

⁵² The annals/biography of Sun Hao (241–283) are in *SGZ* 48/Wu 3.

⁵³ SGZ 48/Wu 3, 1177 PC quoting the *Jin yangqiu* by Sun Sheng of the fourth century. There were also reported stores of 2,800,000 *bu* (56,000,000 litres) of grain, more than 5,000 ships, and 5,000 women in the imperial harem.

⁵⁴ The comment of Deng Ai (c. 200–264) is recorded in his biography, SGZ 28/Wei 28, at 777. Several scholars, including Tang Changru, *Wei-jin nanbeichao sbilun cong* (Beijing, Sanlian Shudian, 1955), pp.22-3, and Miyakawa Hisayuki, *Rikuchō shi kenkyū, seiji shakai ben* [Studies in Six Dynasties history, volume on political and social problems] (Tokyo: Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, 1956), p.33, cite and discuss this passage.

⁵⁵ The clearest statement on hostages is in SGZ 48/Wu 3, 1177 PC quoting the *Sousben ji* by Gan Bao of the early fourth century, where it is said that “Because Wu was a new state, it had not established a firm basis of trust. The administrators and military commanders of positions on the frontiers were all required to send their wives and children, and these were known as *baozhi* 保質.” Although this statement is only preliminary to an anecdote about the supernatural, there is no reason to doubt its basis in fact.

See also Yang Lien-sheng, “Hostages in Chinese history,” in *Studies in Chinese institutional history*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp.43–57 (first published in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 15 [1952]: 507–21), particularly at 50–3; Pong Sing-wai, “*Lun Sanguo shidai zhi dazhu*” [On the great clans of the Three Kingdoms period], *Hsin-Ya Hsüeh-pao* [New Asia Journal] 6.1 (1964): 141–204.

success, and in 280 he was compelled to surrender to the Jin 晉 state of the Sima 司馬 family, which had taken over from Wei and which brought overwhelming force against him. At the time of the surrender, the population of Wu was reported to consist of 523,000 households, 2,300,000 individuals, 32,000 officials, and 230,000 men under arms.⁵³

Overall, the history of Wu may be divided into two periods. At first, under Sun Ce and the younger Sun Quan, it was an energetic and aggressive state commanded by men of military skill and achievement. Those officers who came from outside the ranks of the local gentry, however, depended closely upon the central government and were seldom able to establish an independent position in the society of the south. As the opportunities for expansion ended in the 220s, and the vagaries of politics and personality took their toll of the fortunes of the families of these early leaders, local clans and their retainers came to dominance.

Apart from personal rivalries, therefore, the factional conflicts of the central government reflect the transfer of power from the original leaders of the warlord enterprise to established local families. Within the palace, cadet branches of the Sun clan vied with one another for influence, but just as the authority of the ruler was limited by rivalry and conflict between great clans at the capital, so the central government had a limited authority in the daily affairs of the provinces.

In 253, following the death of Sun Quan, the general Deng Ai 鄧艾 in Wei observed that the great families of Wu, relying on their military strength and their retainers, held the essential power of the state.⁵⁴ Those families of the south-east which supported Sun Ce and Sun Quan in the early years had gained at the expense of their local rivals, and with the passage of time, had secured their positions as local magnates. They could be kept under control by the threat of force and by a system of internal hostages,⁵⁵ but they were not easily overthrown by the chances of politics.

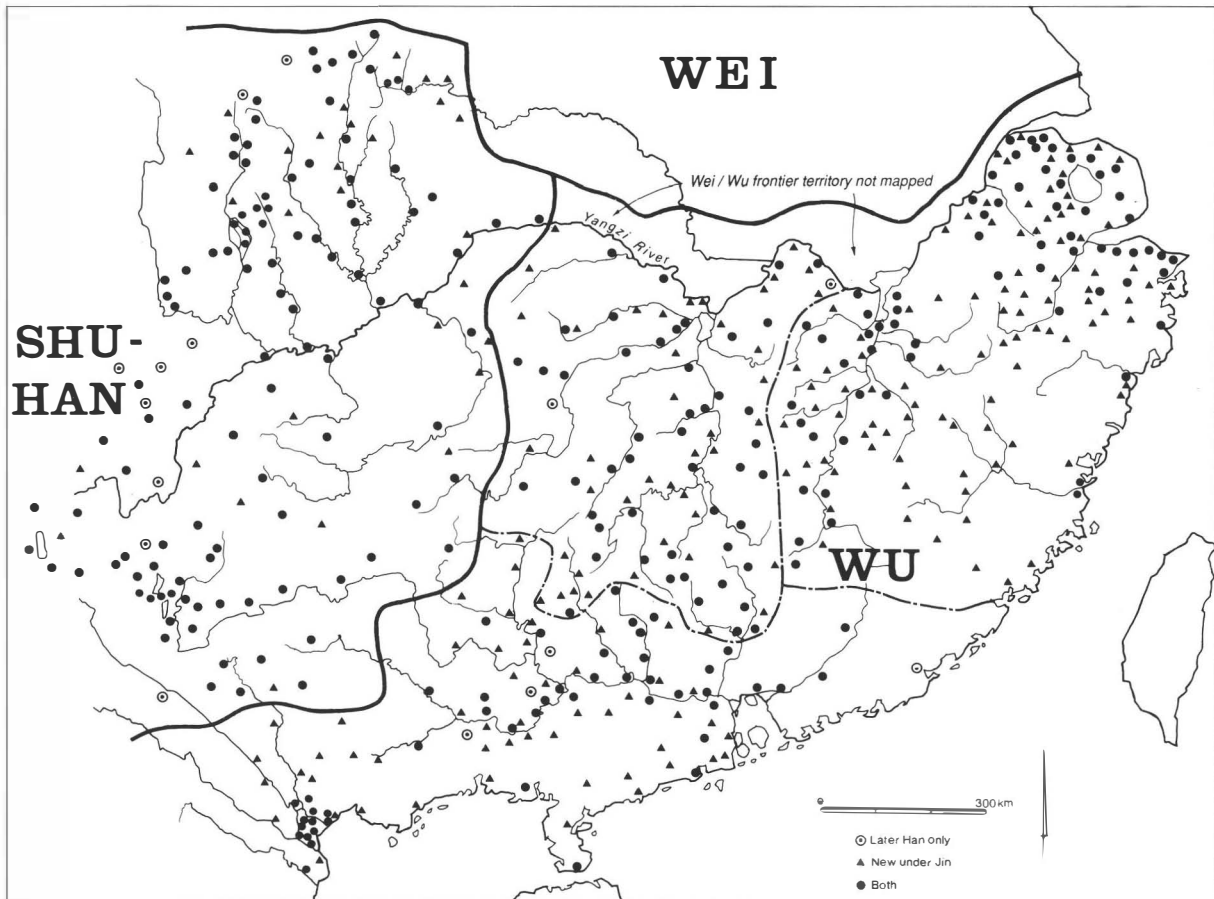
At the basic level, moreover, the government of Wu, recorded by the histories in terms of generals and ministers and intrigues at court, relied upon a broad class of village and county gentry, who might accept provincial office in one commandery or another but had little interest in the politics of the capital. From this point of view, the same pattern was maintained as in the last years of Later Han: essential dues were paid to the imperial government, but the details of its activities were largely irrelevant to local power, influence and survival.

In its later years, therefore, the state of Wu was no longer an ambitious warlord enterprise, but a group of magnates concerned to maintain their wealth and authority. Faced with such a collection of family interests operating at every level, the Sun rulers were never able to establish strong instruments for the control and development of agriculture and the machinery of war with which they might compete efficiently against their rivals. In the end, though the government of Wu held power through its past

military success, it failed to mobilize its resources to the full and it lacked authority over local interests within the state.

One achievement, however, was of great importance for the future. We have noted how the increased population of the south during Han provided opportunity for the first establishment of the separate state. From this base, the rulers of Wu sought to increase the numbers of people and the area of farmland under their control. In order to do so, they pressed constantly against the territory to the south, extracting manpower and taxation from isolated groups of non-Chinese native people as well as Chinese refugees who had earlier settled beyond the reach of the government. As each advance was made, the people were registered as citizens and subjects, and their human and economic resources were put to the cause of further expansion against their neighbours or defence against the north. So the

Map 3 *Colonization in Wu and Shu-Han as indicated by the increase in counties from Later Han (c.140) to Jin (c.280)*



⁵⁶ See, for example, SGZ60/Wu 15, 1377–79 (the biography of He Qi), SGZ 58/Wu 13, 1344 (the biography of Lu Xun), and SGZ 64/Wu 19, 1431–3 (the biography of Zhuge Ke); Fang, *Chronicle* 1, pp.441–2, 519–20.

⁵⁷ Map 3, which shows the establishment of counties in Wu, from the south of the Yangzi to the Red River in Vietnam, together with the contemporary situation in Shu-Han, is based upon research discussed in de Crespigny, “Prefectures and Population in South China in the first three centuries AD” in *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* (Academia Sinica, Taipei) 40 (1968): 139–54, and *Generals of the south*, pp.476–8. See also Hans Bielenstein, “The Chinese colonisation of Fukien until the end of T’ang,” *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren dedicata*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1959), pp.98–112, at 103–6.

⁵⁸ *Jin yangqiu*, cited in note 53 above, states that there were 43 commanderies and 313 counties in the surrendered territory of Wu. I prefer to rely, however, upon the list as presented formally and in detail.

expansion and maintenance of the state of Wu were linked in a policy of warfare and colonization.

It is difficult to assess the speed of this process. In the very earliest years of the state, He Qi extended the authority of the Sun from the isolated coastal counties near present-day Fuzhou up the valleys of the Min River into present-day Jiangxi and southern Zhejiang, and subsequent campaigns confirmed control south of the Huang Shan 黄山. In 234, a final assault was launched against the hill people of Danyang, and this operation, commanded by Zhuge Ke, was a consolidation of Chinese authority.⁵⁶ The process, however, continued elsewhere, sometimes by means of officially sponsored campaigns, more regularly through small-scale but persistent acts of local aggression, a form of steady pressure backed up where necessary by official military force.

One method of assessing the colonization and conquests of the state of Wu in the south-east is to compare the counties listed at the time of the census of Later Han, about 140, with those which appear in the list of the Treatise of Geography in *Jin shu*, compiled soon after the conquest of Wu in 280. The Jin dynasty population figures, based on a taxation list, cannot be compared with those of Han which represent a full census, but the existence of a county must indicate a real Chinese presence.⁵⁷

According to this comparison, the expansion of authority in the south-east was remarkable. By 280, within the area controlled by Wu from the south of the Yangzi to the north of Vietnam, the number of counties had doubled since the time of Later Han, from 160 to 322, and they were spread across territories where no such establishment had been seen before.⁵⁸ The frontier had been transformed, and there were newly confirmed settlements in present-day southern Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Fujian. Though the initiative for expansion had arisen from the needs of the state of Wu, the achievement came eventually to benefit the empire of Jin: driven from the north at the beginning of the fourth century AD, the *émigré* court found refuge and security in the lands which had been developed by Wu.

Shu-Han

⁵⁹ An important article by Hsü Cho-yün, “Sanguo Wudi de difang shili” [Local powers in the state of Wu during the period of Three Kingdoms], *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* (Academia Sinica, Taipei) 37.1 (1967): 185–200, contrasts the following of the Sun family in Wu with the wider base from which Liu Bei drew his officers and counsellors in Shu-Han. Hsü (at p.200) concludes that this indicates greater central authority in Shu-Han, closer to the tradition of Han, and contrasts this with the more

If the state of Wu was based on the military achievement of one local family and its supporters, the claimant empire of Shu-Han in the west was the work of an itinerant warlord entrepreneur and the soldiers of fortune who accepted his leadership.⁵⁹

The history of Shu-Han, and particularly that of the founder Liu Bei and his chief minister Zhuge Liang, has been considerably distorted by the romantic tradition which presents Liu Bei as a hero of chivalry and Zhuge Liang as a master of warfare and magic. While Cao Cao is described as the powerful, proud and arrogant usurper of the imperial mandate, and the men of Wu as ineffectual and self-seeking, sometimes treacherous, the govern-

ment of Shu-Han is lauded as the true successor of the fallen empire and the centre of wisdom, courage and loyalty.

It is possible to trace the elements of such a cycle of stories to the Tang period and earlier, but it was well developed by Song and Yuan, with a great number of dramas in the traditional repertoire, and it came to full flower with the historical novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, during Ming. The bias in favour of Shu-Han may also be found in the comments of the great philosopher, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), on 'legitimate succession',⁶⁰ and the concept of a 'true' government, still maintained on Chinese soil but exiled from the traditional centre of power, found popularity not only in Zhu Xi's dynasty of Southern Song but also in the modern Republic of China on Taiwan.

Despite this romantic tradition, and although some modern scholars have sought to use its material as a guide to the history of the Three Kingdoms, it is important to realize that the novel and the dramas are not independent sources of information. They are frequently and sometimes deliberately mistaken in what they recount, and they are of no more value for the study of the time they purport to describe than are the plays of Shakespeare for the history of England, Scotland or Rome.⁶¹

On the other hand, though we must ignore the brilliant falsehoods of romance, the history of Shu-Han is still remarkable.

The founder of the state, Liu Bei, came from Zhuo 涿 commandery near present-day Beijing, and he acquired his first reputation in warfare during the Yellow Turban 黃巾 rebellion of 184. When civil war broke out in the 190s he served or allied himself with one warlord after another, and held short-lived power over substantial territory in north China. In 200, however, at the time of the campaign between Cao Cao and Yuan Shao around Guandu, Liu Bei's force was destroyed by a detachment of Cao Cao's army, and he fled to take refuge with Liu Biao.

For the next several years, Liu Bei played no notable role in the politics of the empire. He did, however, maintain the followers who had accompanied him into exile, he developed connections among Liu Biao's own entourage, and it was at this time he met Zhuge Liang. In 208, when Liu Biao died and Cao Cao came south, Liu Bei established himself as the chief of those who sought to oppose the surrender. He was briskly defeated, but fled to seek support from Sun Quan, and after the victory at the Red Cliffs he established a position in the southern part of Jing province.

In 211, Liu Bei was invited into Yi province by the Governor, Liu Zhang, to assist him in dealing with enemies on his northern borders. Liu Zhang, not a man of military distinction or great personal authority, sought the borrowed authority and the experienced army of his nominal 'cousin', but a strong party at Liu Zhang's court was prepared to welcome Liu Bei as ruler of the whole territory. Liu Bei agreed to their proposal, and little more than a year after his arrival in the west he turned against his patron and employer. In the

/limited ambition of the rulers of Wu. To my mind, however, such calculations merely reflect the vagabond career of Liu Bei, who gathered followers where he might.

⁶⁰ For recent discussion of this concept see Mansvelt Beck, "Fall of Han," *CC* 1, p.373-5.

⁶¹ Several recent works discuss *Sanguo yanyi* from a literary and quasi-historical point of view. I have found one of the most helpful analyses to be that of Andrew H. Plaks, *Four masterworks of the Ming novel: Ssu ta ch'i-shu* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), which deals with the work in its rightful form, as fiction. I have considered the novel as a source for history in *Generals of the south*, pp.578-89.



Figure 3

Zhuge Liang deceives Sima Yi with the stratagem of the 'empty city': a seventeenth-century woodblock print. This incident is celebrated in Chapter 95 of the novel Sanguo yanyi, and demonstrates the prejudice shown in favour of Zhuge Liang and the men of Shu-Han by that romantic tradition. The 'empty city' stratagem is recorded in a fragment of the third-century Wei lue, preserved in the commentary to SGZ 18, 549-50. In that early account, however, we are told how the invader Sun Quan was deceived by the Wei commander Wen Ping in Jiangxia, near present-day Wuhan. It does not appear that there was originally any connection with Zhuge Liang.

summer of 214 he received Liu Zhang's surrender and established his own regime at Chengdu 成都.

In 219 the decisive victory over Xiahou Yuan established Liu Bei's control of the Han valley, and gave justification for his claim to the royal and then imperial title of Han. Further east, however, the destruction of Guan Yu, and the failure of Liu Bei's expedition down the Yangzi three years later, restricted the extent of his territory to Yi province, and despite its imperial pretensions Shu-Han could not recover from those massive defeats.

When Liu Bei died in 223, his son Liu Shan 劉禪 was seventeen,⁶² but Zhuge Liang acted as regent and held control of the government. He confirmed the alliance with Wu, and in campaigns to the south during 224 and 225 he established control of the territory and people as far as Dian Lake 滇池 in present-day Yunnan.⁶³ In 227 he turned his attention to the north: from Hanzhong he launched a series of attacks across the Qin Ling range, and he encouraged defection among the Wei commanders to the west, in present-day Hubei. The renegade Meng Ta 孟達, however, was quickly destroyed by the Wei general Sima Yi 司馬懿,⁶⁴ and Zhuge Liang was not able to establish a position. In 229 he did acquire the territory of Wudu 武都 commandery, the southern part of present-day Gansu on the upper Han valley, and in 233 he embarked on a renewed attempt to break the line of the mountain barrier. He was, however, successfully opposed by Sima Yi, and died the following year.

After a short period of intrigue and confusion, Zhuge Liang's position as commander-in-chief and head of government was taken by Jiang Wan 蔣琬.⁶⁵ Like Zhuge Liang, Jiang Wan had his

headquarters in Hanzhong, on the frontier against Wei, and the central administration at Chengdu was maintained by a secondary office. In 244, Jiang Wan became ill and left active service, and on his death in 246 Liu Shan, now forty years old, took formal authority at the capital. Despite his maturity, Liu Shan was an unimpressive ruler. He was accused, probably correctly, of being more interested in his harem and personal pleasures than in the responsibilities of government, and he gave excessive power to his favourite, Chen Zhi 陳祗, and to the eunuch Huang Hao 黃皓.

Though he planned aggressive action, Jiang Wan never presented Wei with a serious threat. His position as chief minister on the frontier was taken by Fei Yi 費禕,⁶⁶ and when Fei Yi was assassinated by a renegade from Wei in 251, command in the north was given to the energetic general Jiang Wei 姜維.⁶⁷ For the strategists of Shu-Han, an attack from Hanzhong eastwards down the river against the region of Nanyang, though tempting, was put out of consideration by the difficulty of retreat upstream should the invasion be defeated. As a result, for the next ten years, Jiang Wei sought to break the

line of the Qin Ling range, primarily through alliance with the non-Chinese Qiang 姜. The men of Wei, however, consolidated their power with a programme of agricultural garrisons, while the energies and morale of the people of Shu-Han were exhausted by the years of failure.

In the early 260s, after the Sima family had established control of the government of Wei, they planned an attack on Shu-Han. In the autumn of 263 they captured the passes into Hanzhong, and while one army held Jiang Wei in the north-west the general Deng Ai proceeded against Chengdu. In the winter, after victory in a single pitched battle, he received the surrender of Liu Shan. There was a brief period of intrigue and confusion as Deng Ai was dismissed and then assassinated, and Jiang Wei and a rebel commander of Wei, Zhong Hui 鍾會, sought to establish an independent position,⁶⁸ but the plotters were killed, and in the summer of 264 Liu Shan was received into honoured exile at Luoyang.

At the time of the surrender, the population of Shu-Han was reported to consist of 280,000 households, 940,000 individuals, 40,000 officials, and 102,000 men under arms.⁶⁹ The registered population of Yi province under Later Han had been 7,250,000, and even the three commanderies about Chengdu had numbered more than 575,000 households with 2,250,000 individuals. In the *Treatise of Geography of the Jin shu*, which preserves the tax assessment figures for some twenty years later, the population of the territory is given as just over 300,000 households. This is compatible with the Shu-Han record, and clearly indicates a quota system of taxation rather than a decline in the number of people physically inhabiting the province.⁷⁰ No government of this time was able to maintain the same level of control as had the local administrators of Han, and the nominal losses of population were much the same over all the divided empire.

On the other hand, although the state of Wu had made some attempt to establish a structure of government which might echo the traditions of Han, Shu-Han appears to have had no more than the most basic civil administration. On the death of Zhuge Liang, the office of Chancellor came to an end. Jiang Wan held his senior position with the title Marshal of State 大司馬, and Fei Yi, head of the government at Chengdu, was General-in-Chief 大將軍, Intendant of the Secretariat 錄尚書事 and Governor of Yi province. Soon after Jiang Wan's death, Fei Yi moved to the campaign headquarters in Hanzhong, and Jiang Wei, also with command in the north, became Intendant of the Secretariat. So the senior officials of the state held military titles and were regularly engaged in war, while civilian matters at Chengdu were in the hands of Liu Shan and his favourites. In such circumstances, the administration of Shu-Han was that of a warlord regime, with emphasis on the recruitment and supply of troops and on the personal interests of the chieftain. There were, of course, clerical offices to support the work, but it was not a government for long-term planning and development.⁷¹

⁶² The annals/biography of Liu Shan (207–271), Later Sovereign of Shu-Han, are in *SGZ* 33/Shu 3.

⁶³ The campaigns of Zhuge Liang against the chieftain Meng Huo 孟獲 are celebrated in the romantic tradition, occupying chapters 87 to 91 of the novel *Sanguo yanyi*, and providing the theme for a cycle of traditional dramas.

⁶⁴ The biography of Sima Yi (179–251), retrospectively titled Emperor Xuan of Jin, is in *JS* 1.

⁶⁵ The biography of Jiang Wan (d. 246) is in *SGZ* 44/Shu 14.

⁶⁶ The biography of Fei Yi is in *SGZ* 44/Shu 14.

⁶⁷ The biography of Jiang Wei (202–264) is in *SGZ* 44/Shu 14.

⁶⁸ The biography of Zhong Hui (207–246) is in *SGZ* 28/Wei 28.

⁶⁹ *SGZ* 33/Shu 3, 901 PC quoting the *Shu Ji* of Wang Yin of the late third and early fourth centuries.

⁷⁰ *JS* 14, 436–40, on the three provinces, Liang 涼, Yi and Ning 寧, which covered approximately the same territory as Yi province of Later Han. On the population statistics of the various dynastic histories and the distinction between true census figures and those of taxation lists see Bielenstein, "Census," especially pp.154–5.

⁷¹ There is a telling remark by the historian Chen Shou, compiler of *SGZ*, who was himself an official of the state of Shu. In his Criticism at the end of the annals/biography of Liu Shan, Chen Shou observes that the state did not employ historians, that there was no office responsible for collecting essential material, and that as a result there are many items of information, notably accounts of portents, missing. He suggests that the military exigencies of the time had prevented the government of Shu from paying proper attention to its responsibilities in this (*SGZ* 33/Shu 3, 902–03). It seems probable that although various items of information were recorded in such institutions as the Eastern Lodge, where Chen Shou himself held appointment, no regular archive was established. See also de Crespigny, *Generals of the south*, p.544, n.20.

⁷² See *Huayang guozhi*, compiled by Chang Qu and others about the middle of the fourth century (12 chapters, in *Sibu congkan*) 4, 1a and 4a; SGZ43/Shu 13, 1045–6 PC; SGZJ 41/Shu 11, 2a.

⁷³ See pp.19–20 and Map 3 above.

One effect of this limitation may be seen in the relationship of the government of Shu-Han with the lands of the south. When Liu Bei seized power at Chengdu in 214, he established the divisional office of Laixiang 庲降 to administer the southern part of his territory,⁷² and the campaigns of Zhuge Liang of the mid-220s destroyed the non-Chinese alliance led by Meng Huo. It should be observed, however, that the settlement imposed on the defeated tribes by Zhuge Liang left the people under the continuing control of their native leaders, confirming that power with seals and other emblems of authority. In formal terms they were subjects of Shu-Han, but the records refer to several later rebellions in the southern commanderies, and although the people were brought under control without great difficulty, they did not add notably to the resources of the state.

In this respect, we may contrast the policy of Shu-Han with that of Wu, where initial conquest was followed by firm colonization and the establishment of new units for local control. As a result, while the number of counties in the territory of Wu doubled during the century and a half between the census of Later Han and the register of Jin, in the territory of Shu-Han there was a net gain of just twenty per cent, and there was no real programme of development.⁷³

In sum, once Sun Quan had confirmed his hold on the middle Yangzi, the only areas of expansion for Shu-Han lay to the north and the south. Southwards, the government of Zhuge Liang and his successors contented themselves with a general authority, but they did not develop the human and material resources they had acquired. Instead, they concentrated their efforts on the north and exhausted their limited strength in futile aggression. Shu-Han was founded as a warlord enterprise in a provincial state, and it never became anything more.

Wei and the Sima Family

⁷⁴ See, for example, Ebrey, "Later Han," CC 1, pp.558–9; Chen Ch'i-yün, "Han dynasty China: economy, society and state power," *T'oung Pao* 70 (1984): 127–48 (review article on Hsu Cho-yun, *Han agriculture: the formation of early Chinese agrarian economy (200 BC–AD 220)* [Seattle: Washington University Press, 1980]).

In particular, at the beginning of Later Han in 39 AD, Emperor Guangwu attempted to carry out a full survey of cultivated land in the empire. Despite severe punishments for false or inadequate reporting it appears the project was never successfully completed. See, for example, Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp.55, 210–12; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, part 4, pp.136–7.

When compared with Shu-Han, with Wu, and with the Gongsun family of the north-east, the state of Wei established by Cao Cao must be regarded as the effective successor to the fallen empire of Han. Apart from the abdication by Emperor Xian in favour of Cao Pi in 220, Wei controlled the heartlands of China and some seventy per cent of the formerly registered population. This achievement has, of course, been recognized by traditional historians, but there has also been long debate on the reasons for the failure of Wei to reunite the whole of the empire, and this has led to criticism of the state and its rulers either for lack of enterprise or for lack of moral virtue.

We have noted, however, that the increase in the Chinese population south of the Yangzi and the military competence of the government of Sun Quan made the conquest of that territory extremely difficult – and while Shu-Han in the west remained independent, the northern regime was faced with

two substantial opponents who could not be eliminated quickly. Indeed, rather than criticize Cao Cao for not restoring the whole empire of Han, one should admire his achievement in successfully re-establishing government in the north.

On all evidence, the breakdown of imperial authority at the end of the second century AD was far more serious than it had been at the beginning of the first. At the simplest level of calculation, the earlier period of full civil war lasted only fifteen years, from the rebellion against Wang Mang in 22 to Emperor Guangwu's defeat of his last major enemy, Gongsun Shu 公孫術, in 36. In contrast, by 207, when Cao Cao had established full dominance over the North China plain, the structure of Han government had disappeared, the empire had been devastated by twenty years of turmoil, and later events would prove that control of central China no longer guaranteed control of the periphery.

This political and military perspective partly concealed an important change in Chinese society. At the beginning of Later Han, the reunification of the empire had depended to some extent upon the support which Emperor Guangwu obtained from leading clans and local families, and the power of the government had been substantially limited by its political debts.⁷⁴ In the two hundred years which followed, gentry control in the countryside grew steadily, with land, tenants, clients and armed retainers, and the real authority of the court and the capital was proportionally weakened. The collapse of authority in civil war confirmed this development, and presented both the opportunity and the necessity for non-official organizations for self-protection.

The problem facing Cao Cao was twofold: there were great numbers of refugees, driven from their homes by war and famine, and at the same time there were numerous local groups which had taken responsibility for many of the people and which offered low-level competition for legitimacy and power. Many of these, often described as 'bandits' or 'rebels', were formed amongst the peasants, sometimes taking the form of clan groupings or religious associations.⁷⁵ The great majority of dispossessed or uncertain people, however, gathered about some local magnate,⁷⁶ and through this pattern of commendation the power of the gentry clans, which had already been great under Later Han, came to dominate the local economy, society and administration. The restoration of full imperial power required not merely victory in war, but also the re-establishment or replacement of a system of government which had been growing steadily less effective for the past two hundred years.

At an early stage of the civil war, in about 196, Cao Cao established a number of 'agricultural garrisons' (*tuntian* 屯田) in the neighbourhood of Xu city, his chief headquarters. There was arable land nearby which had been abandoned by refugees and was available to the government, and it was sensible and appropriate that surplus people should be allocated the empty

⁷⁵ The Five Pecks of Rice sect under Zhang Lu in Hanzhong commandery was the most successful religious grouping of the time; see n.17 above. Another was the remnant Yellow Turbans of Qing province, who joined Cao Cao early in his career; see n.8 above.

One important collection of secular groups was the Black Mountain (Heishan 黑山) bandits of the Taihang mountains, who became powerful after the Yellow Turban rebellion of 184 and were authorized to make their own nominations for candidates to government office; see the biography of Zhang Yan 張燕 ('Flying Swallow Zhang') in *SGZ* 8/Wei 8, 261-62; de Crespigny, *Emperor Huan and Emperor Ling: being the chronicle of Later Han for the years 157 to 189 AD as recorded in chapters 54 to 59 of the Zizhi tongjian of Sima Guang*, 2 vols, (Canberra, Australian National University, 1989), vol. 1, pp.192-3.

Among clan groupings, we are told particularly of those in the region of Poyang, south of the Yangzi (*SGZ* 49/Wu 4, 1190 PC quoting *jiangbiao zhuan*); discussed by Nishijima Sadao in "The Economic and Social History of Former Han," *CC* 1, pp.545-607 at 629. The Sun family in the south also had dealings with less organized gatherings of refugees in the marsh country near the junction of the Han with the Yangzi (*SGZ* 51/Wu 6, 1206, and *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1260); de Crespigny, *Generals of the south*, pp.323-40.

⁷⁶ One commonly-cited example is the community in the northern part of the North China plain which gathered under the leadership of Tian Chou 田疇 (169-214), who is said to have controlled some 5,000 families of refugees and set up a government and code of laws for them (*SGZ* 11/Wei 11, 341); de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, p.107; Nishijima, "Former Han," *CC* 1, p.630, n.75. See also the discussion in Tanigawa Michio, *Medieval society and the local 'community'*, transl. Joshua A. Fogel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp.102-3, on the development of the *cun* 村, Miyakawa, *Rikuchō shi kenkyū*, pp.437-71; Miyazaki Ichisada, "Chūgoku ni okeru shūroku keitai no hensen ni tsuite" [On changes in the configurations of centres of population in China], *Otani Shigaku* 6 (June 1957): 5-26.

⁷⁷ *SGZ* 1/Wei 1, 14 and PC note 1 quoting *Weishu*. The latter passage tells, by contrast, how at this time the soldiers of Yuan Shao in the north were reduced to scavenging for mulberries and jujubes, while those of Yuan Shu in the region of the Huai looked for oysters and clams. See also, *JS* 26, 782; Yang, "Economic history," p.158. Two years earlier, according to *SGZ* 1/Wei 1, 12, the price of a single *hu* of grain (about 20 litres) had reached more than half a million cash.

The term *tuntian* had been recognized since the time of Former Han, and the technique had been used to control marginal or non-Chinese territories in the north and north-west. In particular, during the first century BC, the general Zhao Chongguo 趙充國 had recommended and carried out a programme of setting up agricultural garrisons in the valley of the Xining River (in present-day Gansu). The colonies were manned by Chinese troops, occupying ground formerly held by the non-Chinese Qiang. See, for example, de Crespigny, *Northern frontier*, pp.63–4; Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp.139–41, 236–7.

There are indications that the technique had been used at earlier stages of the civil war. See, for example, *HHS* 73/63, 2363, and *SGZ* 7/Wei 7, 230 PC n.1 quoting *Xian-xian xingzhuang*; de Crespigny, *Generals of the south*, pp.314–16. The achievement of Cao Cao's government was to develop and apply the programme widely and effectively.

A helpful discussion of the *tuntian* system may be found in William Gordon Crowell, "Government land policies and systems in early imperial China" (PhD diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 1979), pp.144–82.

⁷⁸ e.g. Hsu, *Han agriculture*, pp.53–6; Chen, "Economy, Society and State Power," pp.147–8; Bielenstein, *Restoration*, part 4, pp.136–7, 157–8.

⁷⁹ Cao Cao's officer, Han Hao 韓浩, was involved in the proposal for the establishment of the agricultural garrisons at this time. His biography from *Weishu*, quoted in *SGZ* 9/Wei 9, 269 PC note 1 *bis*, refers to at least one formal assembly called to discuss policy on this matter, and echoes of the discussion may be found in a eulogy issued by Cao Cao in honour of Zao Zhi, who died soon after the plan was put into effect. Zao Zhi has no individual biography in *SGZ*, but

fields. The distinctive point about the new system, however, was that the farmers maintained a direct relationship with the government, being granted supplies and material assistance, and returning a regular share of produce to the imperial granaries and treasury.⁷⁷

Traditionally, under the Han dynasty, a tax had been levied upon each subject's land-holding, while other government exactions, such as poll tax, civil corvée and military conscription or payment for substitutes, placed a heavy burden on the peasant farmer. The opportunities for corruption and confusion, and for false reporting and evasion, were very great, particularly since the bureaucrats responsible for the collection of these revenues tended to come from the land-owning families themselves.⁷⁸ The new agricultural garrisons, through concentrating on sharing the yield, removed the need for surveys of the quantity and quality of land, and by placing peasants under the direct control of the government the system eliminated the influences of private interest.

A good deal of debate took place before this policy on sharing production was determined. Since the government was providing the land and farming equipment— notably oxen for the heavy work of ploughing—there were many who argued that farmers should be required to pay a fixed rental, regardless of the value of the crop. Cao Cao's adviser Zao Zhi 棗祗, however, argued that the government levy should be calculated as a percentage of the yield, not as a fixed sum: the share-cropping system provided a steady incentive towards higher production, and although a fixed sum might appear more likely to produce a guaranteed return, it would still be necessary to reduce payments in times of poor harvest. This was agreed, and it appears that the government received 50 percent of the annual yield from the tenant of a garrison, or 60 percent when the oxen used were owned by the state.⁷⁹

The first garrisons were set up under the administration of Ren Jun 任峻, a close adviser to Cao Cao, who was appointed Commissioner for Agriculture 典農中郎將 with authority comparable to that of the head of a commandery,⁸⁰ and the system was extended into many areas under Cao Cao's control. It was not, however, universally applied, and not all agricultural garrisons were set up directly by the central government. North of the Yellow River, it appears that there was regular household and land tax, with agricultural garrisons in only a few places of particular local need,⁸¹ and in the region of the Huai the local commander, Liu Fu, organized a number of settlements which appear to have remained under the supervision of his office.⁸²

Though earlier agricultural garrisons had been set up primarily for military purposes—and those established by Liu Fu were indeed established to maintain the frontier against Wu—Cao Cao's system was designed as much for the value of its civilian production as for military defence. Tenants of the garrisons were naturally expected to be able to protect themselves in time of emergency, and on occasion they could take part in major work on dams and canals, but they were not conscripted for general corvée labour, nor for

military service; their function was to produce food, the sinews of war, and they were protected from any interference with that duty.⁸³

As a means of physical and political resettlement the agricultural garrisons were remarkably successful, for they confirmed Cao Cao's control of the ground and gave the migrant peasants a new commitment to the regime which had sponsored them. Economically, the system deployed the resources of land and people on terms which provided regular supplies for government and the army. Comparatively speaking, however, the produce of the agricultural garrisons amounted to only a fraction of the resources of the Cao Cao's territory, and it was still necessary for the new regime to establish formal links of authority and service with the many local centres of power. It was in these circumstances that Cao Cao instituted the system of appointments by Nine Ranks and Categories (*jiupin* 九品), and when Cao Pi succeeded his father in 220, the structure was established in the state of Wei.⁸⁴

Traditionally, under Han, recruitment into the imperial service had been through recommendation of a candidate, generally followed by a period of probation at the capital, and then appointment to substantive office. The majority of recommendations were made in the category of 'Filially Pious and Incorrupt' (*xiaolian* 孝廉), and were put forward by the administration of the commandery to which the candidate belonged. Theoretically, the judgement of a nominee's worth was made on the basis of his local reputation, confirmed where appropriate by supervision at court. By the late second century, however, through a natural alliance with peers and colleagues in local government, the business of selection had fallen largely into the hands of the local gentry, and the programme was more a source of influence for great families than a reliable means of obtaining servants for the state. Under the stress of civil war, moreover, the system of Han had broken down entirely, and Cao Cao was compelled to seek some other means to recruit men of ability without encouraging the existing drift towards local authority and separatism.

Formally, the new system echoed the old principles of choice based on local reputation, 'nomination from the district and selection by the village', and those who were put forward had their characters described in terms similar to the 'pure judgements' fashionable among scholars and gentlemen in the later years of Han. Despite this air of legitimate tradition and honest reform, however, such a system in practice only confirmed the opportunity for local men of power to influence the recommendations.

To control self-serving, corrupt and false nominations, the central government of Wei appointed Rectifiers 中正 to each commandery, officials whose duty was to assess the quality of the candidates for office, and to grade them according to their suitability and potential. In this respect, they carried out one of the functions of a Grand Administrator under Han, but there were two notable differences: firstly, these officials were specialists in such judgements, acting as censors for local nominations; and secondly, whereas

it was said that "the wealth of the army and the state [of Cao Cao] began with [the planning of] Zao Zhi and reached its fulfilment with [the work of] Ren Jun." See SGZ 16/Wei 16, 490 PC n.1, quoting *Wei-Wu gushi*; Hsu, *Han agriculture*, p.319, and JS 47, 1321; Yang, "Economic History," p.140.

⁸⁰ The biography of Ren Jun is in SGZ 16/Wei 16. According to the commentary to HHS 116/26, 3591, quoting a work entitled *Wei zhi* (probably a variant text of SGZ), a Commissioner for Agriculture had a rank and salary of 2000 *shi*, the same as that of a Grand Administrator of a commandery in the Han system.

⁸¹ E.g. SGZ 1/Wei 1, 26 and Zhang Weihua, "Shilun Cao-Wei tuntian yu Xi-Jin zhanlian di mou xie wenti" [A few problems concerning the system of military colonization during Wei and land occupation under Western Jin], *Lishi Yanjiu* 1956, 9: 29–42 at 33–4; also JS 26, 782; Yang, "Economic history," pp.159, 140.

⁸² Zhang Weihua, *Cao-Wei tuntian yu Xi-Jin zhanlian*, p.32, observes that agricultural garrisons were responsible primarily to the central or provincial governments which had established them, and were not subject to the local administration of the commanderies and counties in whose territory they were situated.

⁸³ See Tang Changru, *Wei-Jin nanbeichao*, p.41, n.1, citing SGZ 15/Wei 15, 481, and SGZ 28/Wei 28, 761. Similarly, SGZ 12/Wei 12, 388–89, records a memorial from Sima Zhi in about 230, protesting at the developing custom of agricultural garrisons engaging in trade instead of concentrating on farming: "Emperor Wu [Cao Cao] set up the agricultural garrisons specifically to concentrate on agriculture and silk-farming." Much of the memorial is translated in Hsu, *Han agriculture*, p.320.

A memorial of 243 presented by Deng Ai urged the extension of agricultural garrisons in the valley of the Huai with the men serving both as farmers and as soldiers. The primary purpose of the garrisons, however, was to establish and protect supplies of grain for future offensives against Wu. We may note, moreover, that although Deng Ai spoke encouragingly of how "Wu will thus be conquered and [our] arms prevail every where" (SGZ 28/Wei 28, 775–76, translated by Mark Elvin, *The pattern of the /OVER*

/Chinese past [London: Eyre Methuen, 1973], pp.37–8, citing He Changqun, *Han-Tangjian fengjian tudi suoyouzhi xingshi yanjiu* [The forms taken by feudal land tenure systems from Han to Tang times] (Shanghai 1964), p.68), the value of the settlements lay chiefly in their contribution to the defence of the Huai, and the general improvement of the economic resources of the state. The position of Wu, based on the Yangzi along this south-eastern front, was never seriously threatened by Wei, and we shall see later that Jin conquered Wu only when it had gained overwhelming naval dominance on the river and advanced by water from west to east, not by land from north to south.

Other discussions of the *tuntian* system, which should always be read with some caution and related to the particular political and strategic situation of the time, are provided by Chi Ch'ao-ting, *Key economic areas in Chinese history, as revealed in the development of public works for water control* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936), pp.99–105, and Yang, "Economic history," pp.163–70, translating *JS* 26, 784–6.

⁸⁴ The most comprehensive work on this subject is that of Miyazaki Ichisada, *Kyūbin kanjin hō no kenkyū: kakyō zenshi* [The mechanism of the aristocracy in China: installation of mandarins before the establishment of the competitive examination system] (Kyoto: Tōyōshi Kenkyūkai, 1956). Donald Holzman, "Les débuts du système médiéval de choix et de classement des fonctionnaires: les neuf catégories et l'Impartial et Juste," *Mélanges de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises*, vol. 1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), pp.387–414, has presented an excellent analysis. Among many works on the topic in Chinese and Japanese, note also the discussion in Miyakawa, *Rikuchō shi kenkyū*, pp.263–314.

It is said that the system in its full form was established by the Minister of Finance, Chen Qun 陳羣 (d. 236), in the time of Cao Pi (*Taiping yulan* 265, quoting Fu Xuan [217–278]). There is evidence, however, that the system had been developing for some years before this, and the biography of Chen Qun in *SGZ* 22/Wei 22 makes no mention of his contribution.

⁸⁵ Holzman, "Système médiéval," pp.399–401. It was possible for a man to have his categ-

in Han times senior local officials had been deliberately appointed to hold office outside their home country, the Rectifiers were required to supervise their own native territory. They were, however, commissioned from the capital, and it was hoped that they would act rather as informed agents of the state than as representatives of purely local interests.

The judgement of the Rectifiers was expressed by allocation into one of nine categories, backed by a summary description of the candidate's character. In similar fashion, all offices in the empire were graded into nine ranks, although there was no necessary correlation between the category of an official and the rank of his current office. The category was rather a judgement of potential, and men of the highest category were regarded as eligible for appointment to the highest positions.⁸⁵

Though there were a number of subordinates to assist the Rectifiers in their work, and some senior officials with different titles were established at provincial level, there were frequent complaints that the officers were over-extended and could not make full investigation of the multitude of candidates. Predictably, there were also accusations of favouritism, many of them justified, and in practice it appears that the system became the means by which men of good family entrenched themselves in power. In a celebrated memorial presented during the early years of Western Jin, Liu Yi 劉毅 objected to the arbitrary power of these officials, claiming that:

there are no men of humble family in the highest categories, nor do any representatives of powerful clans appear among the lower ranks.⁸⁶

And the modern Japanese scholar, Tanigawa Michio, has observed that:

it was the aristocratic stratum in the Six Dynasties which . . . established itself as a ruling class. The most concrete, structural manifestation of their institutionalization was the Nine Ranks recruitment system for the bureaucracy.⁸⁷

The system had been designed to satisfy the claims of leading local families to a role in the government while still maintaining some control over the full exercise of their influence. In the long term, given the power of the great clans, the attempt was doomed to failure, and the state of Wei remained vulnerable to the ambitions of its mighty subjects.

There was, in this respect, critical disagreement between the new regime of the Cao and the ambitions of other great clans in the reconstituted empire. While men of good family naturally looked for a continuation of the processes which had developed under Han, with increasing autonomy for their local interests and power, Cao Cao and his associates sought the restoration of strong central government, with laws and administration which would bring an end to the weakness and disorder that bedevilled the last century of Han.⁸⁸ In summary terms, while the government of Cao Cao looked for a 'Legalist' or 'Modernist' solution to the political crisis, their leading subjects were concerned with the status and power of their families, justified by a 'Confucian', 'Reformist' morality.⁸⁹

The authority and legitimacy of the state of Wei was based upon success in civil war and a special relationship with the tradition of Han. Through more than twenty years, Cao Cao developed a parallel government whereby he himself held the nominal position of chief servant of the dynasty, but also maintained a separate administrative and military structure under his own command. When his son and successor, Cao Pi, received the abdication of Emperor Xian of Han and took the imperial title for himself, it was indeed generally accepted that the Mandate of Heaven had changed, and that the power of Earth, represented by the colour yellow, had succeeded to the Fire and red of Han.⁹⁰

Besides its military strength, and the mystical authority which could be claimed from Han, the new regime enhanced its position with the outward signs of power and prosperity. The three chief cities, Luoyang which had been the capital of Later Han, Xu the residence of Emperor Xian, and Ye the former headquarters of Yuan Shao, now the centre of Wei administration, were each restored and adorned with monuments. In 210, Cao Cao had the Copper Bird Terrace 銅雀臺 built on the walls of Ye, and the occasion was celebrated with a rhapsody by his son, Cao Zhi 曹植.⁹¹

On a pleasure-tour with the brilliant ruler,
we climb the storied terrace with feelings of delight;
We see all the palace stretched out below,
and we gaze upon the works of wisdom and virtue:
He has raised great gates like rugged hills,
he has floated twin turrets into the clouds,
He has built a splendid tower to reach the heavens,
he has joined flying bridges to the western walls.
We look down to the long thread of the Zhang River,
we look out to the flourishing growth of the orchards;
We lift our heads to the gentle majesty of the spring breeze,
and we hear the competing cries of a hundred birds.
The heavenly work is established firm as a wall,
the wishes of our house are brought to fulfilment,
Good influence reaches all the world,
and every respect and reverence is paid to the capital;
Though the hegemony of the past were magnificent,
how can they compare to your wisdom and virtue?

Cao Zhi was then eighteen years old, and the rhapsody is not his finest work, but the theme and the author symbolize two notable aspects of the state of Wei, for Cao Zhi is admired as one of the greatest poets of China. Cao Cao himself was a man of considerable literary talent, his eldest son and heir, Cao Pi, had genuine ability as a composer and a scholar of literature, and Cao Pi's son, Cao Rui 曹叡, was also respected as a poet.⁹² Moreover, this succession of talented rulers gathered and sponsored a host of poets, writers and scholars, respected and admired in their own time and in subsequent generations, who gave an intellectual splendour to what might

/ory varied on the basis of his performance in office, and it appears that the highest category, number one, was not awarded, being reserved for the emperor himself and perhaps his designated successor.

It should be observed that the category into which a man was classified, and the ranks of office in the bureaucracy, were both indicated by the Chinese term *pin*.

⁸⁶ The biography of Liu Yi (d. 285) is in JS45; his memorial appears at 1273–77. It is translated by J. Li Dun, *The civilization of China: from the formative period to the coming of the West—translations and introductions* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), pp.122–30 (this extract at 125). The quotation is rendered more accurately by Holzman, "Système médiéval," p.413.

⁸⁷ Tanigawa, *Medieval society*, p.112.

⁸⁸ Cao Cao made clear statements of his approach, first in an ordinance of 210, in which he asked that people should only recommend men of talent, promising that he would use them in office, and again in 217, when he observed that so long as he knew a man had ability in government, he had no concern for his personal conduct or background (SGZ1/Wei 1, 32 and 49–50 PC quoting the *Wei shu* of Wang Shen); both texts are translated by Donald Holzman, "Les sept sages de la forêt des bambous et la société de leur temps," *T'oung Pao* 44 (1956): 317–46, at 323.

On the trend towards an authoritarian political philosophy at the time of the fall of Han see the seminal work of Etienne Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis at the end of Han," *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy: variations on a theme*, transl. H. M. Wright, ed. Arthur F. Wright (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp.187–225 (first published as "La crise sociale et la philosophie politique à la fin des Han," in *T'oung Pao* 39 [1949]: 83–131).

⁸⁹ It is not appropriate to go into the details of this philosophical debate here. The matter is discussed by Ch'en Ch'i-yün, "Confucian, Legalist and Taoist thought in Later Han," *CC* 1, pp.766–807 at 783–94 and 802–4. See also the brief analysis of 'Modernism' and 'Reformism' in Michael Loewe, "The Former Han dynasty," *CC* 1, pp.103–222 at 104–6.

⁹⁰ On the symbolism of the Powers and their associated colours in the cosmology and propaganda of this time see, for /OVER

/example, Mansvelt Beck, "Fall of Han," CC1, p.360. Besides the obvious example of the Yellow Turban rebellion in 184, it is notable that Cao Pi chose the slogan *Huang chu* 'Yellow Beginning' for his first reign title in 220, that when Sun Quan in Wu proclaimed his effective independence for Wei in 222 he chose *Huang wu* 'Yellow Warfare', and when he took the imperial title in 229 he adopted the slogan *Huang long* 'Yellow Dragon'.

⁹¹ The text of the *Dengloufu* is preserved in a fragment of the *Wei ji* by Yin Fan, quoted in commentary to the biography of Cao Zhi (192–232) in SGZ 19/Wei 19, 558 PC n.1.

⁹² The annals/biography of Cao Rui (204–239), Emperor Ming of Wei (accessed 226) are in SGZ 3/Wei 3.

⁹³ The biography of Wang Can (177–217), with supplementary biographies of other scholars and writers of Wei, is in SGZ 21/Wei 21. During the worst of the civil war in the north several of these men had been under the protection of Liu Biao, Governor of Jing province, and they came into association with Cao Cao after his take-over of that region in 208.

⁹⁴ Cao Cao had at least twenty-five sons by thirteen different women. Cao Pi, Cao Zhang, and Cao Zhi were full brothers, born to the Lady Bian, chief wife of Cao Cao. The biography of Cao Zhang (d. 223) is in SGZ 19/Wei 19.

On the rivalry between Cao Pi and Cao Zhi, largely determined by Cao Pi's appointment as heir apparent in 217 see, for example, de Crespigny, *Last of the Han*, pp.329–31, translating ZZTJ 68, 2150–51.

On the uncertainty at the time of Cao Cao's death and Cao Zhang's interest in the succession see Fang, *Chronicle* 1, pp.1–2, translating ZZTJ 69, 2175–76.

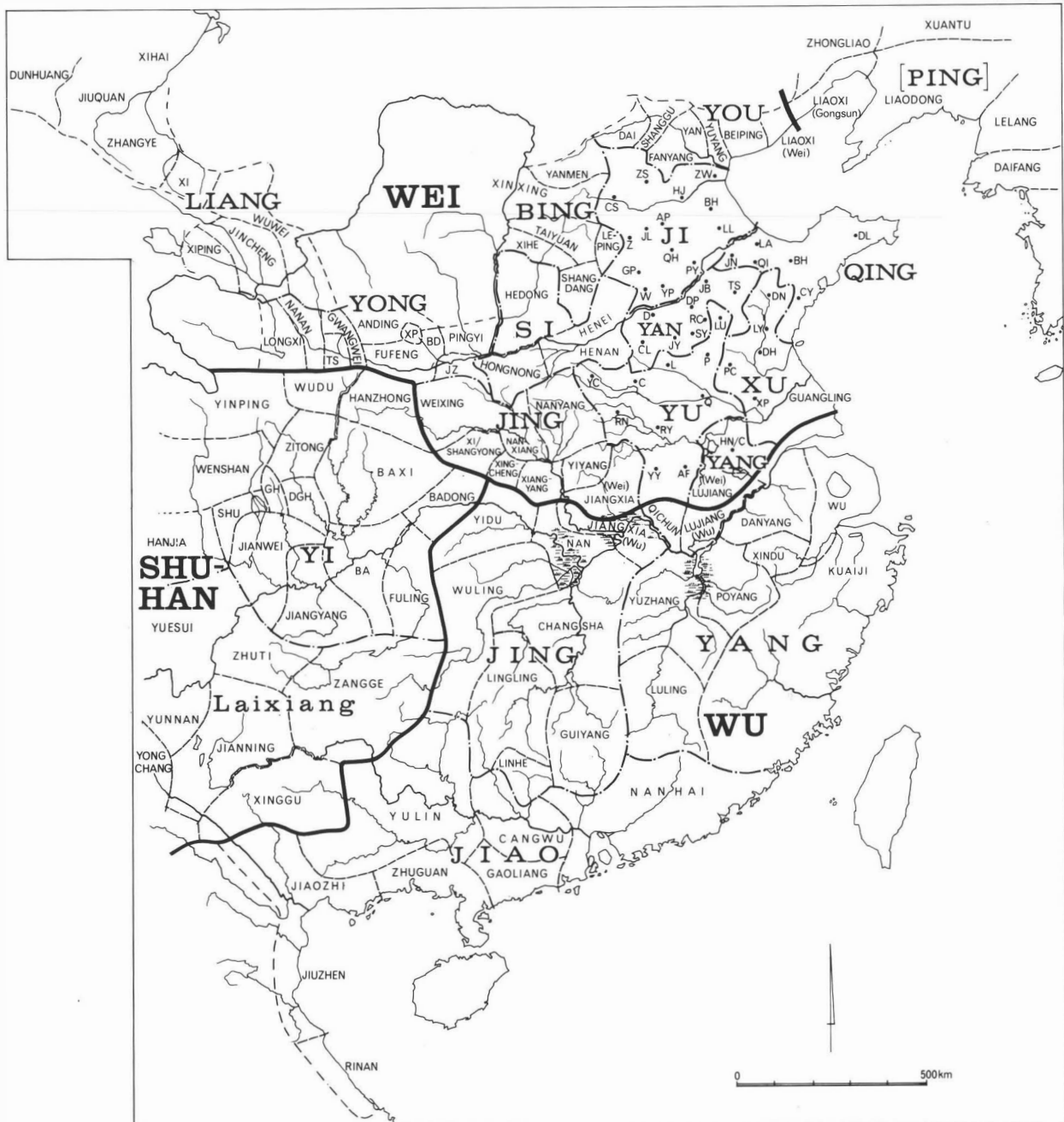
⁹⁵ After the death of Cao Zhang in 223, Cao Zhi composed the celebrated poem dedicated to his half-brother, Cao Biao the Prince of Boma, regretting this treatment, and he also sent in a memorial asking for reconsideration. In 231 he repeated his plea to the new Emperor Cao Rui, but neither case was approved. See also the Comment of Chen Shou to SGZ 20/Wei 20, 591, and the translation and discussion by Fang, *Chronicle* 1, pp.339–48, 356–65.

The Chinese title *wang* is usually rendered 'king', but in cases such as this, where it refers not to an independent ruler such as /OVER

WEI		
<i>Ji province</i>	<i>Yan province</i>	<i>Yang province</i>
AP Anping	CL Chenlu	HN/C Huainan (also called Chu)
BH Bohai	D Dong	
CS Changshan	DP Dongping	
GP Guangping	JB Jibei	<i>Yong province</i>
HJ Hejian	JY Jiying	BD Beidi
JL Julu	RC Rencheng	JZ Jingzhao
LL Leling	SY Shanyang	TS Tianshui
PY Pingyuan	TS Taishan	XP Xiping
QH Qinghe		
W Wei	<i>Xu province</i>	
YP Yangping	DH Donghai	
ZW Zhangwu	DN Donghuan	
Z Zhao	LY Langye	
ZS Zhongshan	PC Pengcheng	
	XP Xiapi WEI	
<i>Yu province</i>	<i>Qing province</i>	<i>SHU-HAN</i>
AF Anfeng		
C Chen	BH Beihai	
L Liang	CY Chenyang	GH Guanghan
LU Lu	DL Donglai	DGH Dongguanhan
P Pei	JN Jinan	(Laixiang territory under
Q Qiao	LA Le'an	Yi Province supervised the
RN Runan	QI Qi	southern commanderies.)
RY Ruyin		
YC Yingchuan		
YY Yiyang		

otherwise have been no more than a military government. The details of their achievement must be analysed elsewhere, but we should recognize that the abilities of the Cao family, in association with such men as Wang Can 王粲 and other masters at the end of Han, represent a flowering of culture which is one of the glories of Chinese civilization, and the leadership of the new government was strengthened by this gathering of distinguished men at court.⁹³

As for any state developed in such a time of crisis and continuing tension, the structure of power at the centre of Wei was by no means certain or secure. By good fortune, Cao Cao lived to the age of sixty-five, and Cao Pi, his eldest son, succeeded him as a mature man of thirty-four. There had, however, been some question whether Cao Zhi, third son of Cao Cao, might not have been named his successor, and the second son, Cao Zhang 曹彰, a competent and experienced military commander, also held some hopes for himself.⁹⁴ One reason Cao Pi arranged to receive the imperial title from Emperor Xian so

**Map 4***The Three Kingdoms c. 230 AD**(abbreviations for some commandery units on the map are given opposite)*

/Sun Quan, King of Wu, but to the restrictive enfeoffment of an emperor's brothers, it seems more appropriate to translate it by the variant 'prince'. Cf. note 36 above.

⁹⁶ *SGZ* 2/Wei 2, 80; Fang, *Chronicle* 1, pp.105–6, 41.

⁹⁷ The biographies of consorts of Wei rulers, with accounts of their origins and families, are in *SGZ* 5/Wei 5. The biography of the Lady Bian (160–230) is at 156–8, that of the Lady Guo (d. 235) at 164–6, and that of the Lady Mao (d. 237) at 167–8.

The first formal wife of Cao Pi was the Lady Zhen 甄, widow of Yuan Xi 袁熙 (the son of Yuan Shao) and a woman of good family. She was the mother of Cao Rui, but she was not appointed Empress when Cao Pi took the imperial title. For the protests by the official Zhan Jian 錢潛 against the appointment of the lowly Lady Guo as Empress at this time see *SGZ* 5/Wei 5, 164–65; Fang, *Chronicle* 1, pp.106–7, 125–6; *SGZ* 25/Wei 25, 718. One generation later, the Lady Yu 虞, who had been the formal wife of Cao Rui up to the time of his accession, was likewise passed over in favour of the Lady Mao, and she commented scathingly on the decision (*SGZ* 5/Wei 5, 167; Fang, *Chronicle* 1, p.229).

⁹⁸ The biography of Chen Qun (d. 236) is in *SGZ* 22/Wei 22. The biographies of Cao Chen (d. 231) and of Cao Xiu (d. 228) are in *SGZ* 9/Wei 9. Described as clansmen of Cao Cao, evidently from different lineages, both achieved high military command.

⁹⁹ On the status of the Sima family in Han see *JS* 1, 1 (which also, predictably, traces the lineage back to legendary times); *SGZ* 15/Wei 15, 466 PC quoting the third-century historian Sima Biao; *SGZ* 12/Wei 12, 386.

¹⁰⁰ The biography of Sima Lang (171–217) is in *SGZ* 15/Wei 15.

¹⁰¹ The romantic tradition reflected in the novel *Sanguo yanyi* makes considerable play of the military rivalry between Zhuge Liang, great minister of Shu-Han, and Sima Yi, with Sima Yi shown as the foil to Zhuge Liang's surpassing skill (see, for example, Figure 3). Many historians, however, have emphasized the military achievements of the founder of the house of Jin, and in fact, though there was considerable military activity against both Shu-Han and Wu during this period, there was no substantial change of the frontier.

soon after his father's death was to confirm his position at the head of the government.

Furthermore, Cao Pi also removed his brothers and half-brothers from any future possibility of threat or rivalry. They were swiftly despatched to the territories of their nominal fiefs, they were held under constant observation, and they were transferred, demoted, or restored in title at frequent intervals. Very occasionally, they were permitted formal visits to the capital, but they were not allowed any place in government.

This firm isolation of the emperor's male relatives remained an established policy of Wei,⁹⁵ and reflected the practice of Han. Cao Pi, however, considering the troubles which had beset the imperial Liu family through the involvement of great families of relatives by marriage, also ordered that the empress-dowager should have no involvement in government, and no member of the clan of an imperial consort should hold position as a regent.⁹⁶ The Lady Bian 卞, dowager of Cao Cao and mother of Cao Pi, was a former sing-song girl; the Lady Guo 郭, chosen Empress of Cao Pi, came of minor gentry stock and had at one time been a servant; and the father of Cao Rui's first Empress Mao 毛, had been a yamen runner: it seems very probable the latter two consorts were deliberately chosen from families which could offer no rivalry to the Cao.⁹⁷ The policies of exclusion, one old and one new, removed two sources of potential disturbance from the court, but they also deprived the imperial lineage of some prestige and political support, and compelled the ruler to rely chiefly upon cadet branches of the family or other clans allied through marriage to princesses.

The effect of the new system was shown in 226, when Cao Pi died at the age of forty. His eldest son Cao Rui, twenty-two years old, came to the throne as an adult, but four regent advisers were appointed for him: the minister Chen Qun, the generals Cao Zhen 曹真 and Cao Xiu 曹休, who were distantly related to the imperial family,⁹⁸ and the general Sima Yi. In practice, the new emperor was permitted to manage affairs for himself, but the combination of guardians reflected the balance of influence which supported the throne. Within a few years, moreover, Cao Zhen, Cao Xiu and Chen Qun were dead, and Sima Yi had become the senior minister and military commander of the empire.

The Sima were a respected, old-established, and widespread family from Henei commandery.⁹⁹ Sima Yi's elder brother Sima Lang 司馬朗 had joined Cao Cao early in the civil war,¹⁰⁰ and Sima Yi, who first held office at the puppet court of Han, followed him in 208 and served on the staff of Cao Cao's headquarters. In 217 he became a member of the suite of Cao Pi as heir apparent, and he was evidently a personal friend. When Cao Pi came to the throne, Sima Yi received steadily higher appointments, and in 224 and 225 he was left in charge of domestic affairs while the emperor led the army against Wu.

A few months after Cao Pi's death in 226, Sima Yi took command in the field for the first time, driving back a secondary attack of Wu against Xiangyang, and in the following year he was given responsibility for military affairs on the Han River. Although he was in his late forties, and his previous experience had been civil and administrative, he proved to be an energetic and competent general, and during the next ten years he held command in the south against Wu and in the west against Shu-Han.¹⁰¹

In 238 Sima Yi was recalled from his headquarters at Chang'an to take command of an offensive against Gongsun Yuan 公孫淵 of Manchuria. In a swift, powerful campaign he brushed aside Gongsun Yuan's defences on the Liao River, captured his capital Xiangping 襄平, and exterminated the warlord government.¹⁰² So the north-east was brought into the domain of Wei, while a further series of campaigns in 244-245, under the general Guanqiu Jian 毋丘儉, broke the power of the non-Chinese state of Koguryō 高句麗 and removed any immediate threat from that region of the frontier.¹⁰³ The Chinese military position in the north-east was now the strongest it had been since the time of Emperor Wu during Former Han, and its political authority was reflected in a series of embassies which came to the court of Wei from the Japanese female ruler Pimiko 卑彌呼.¹⁰⁴

In 238, at the age of thirty-five, Cao Rui died. Having no sons of his own, his adopted successor was a seven-year-old boy, Cao Fang 曹芳, who was surely a close member of the imperial family but whose exact parentage was officially unknown. Cao Rui had replaced the Lady Mao with a new Empress, the Lady Guo 郭, a woman of respectable lineage, but her family, in accordance with the policy of Cao Pi, was kept from power. For a time Cao Rui contemplated a council of regency which would be dominated by members of the imperial clan, but he was finally persuaded to nominate only two men, Cao Shuang 曹爽, son of the former regent Cao Zhen, and Sima Yi.¹⁰⁵

From the beginning of the joint regency, the chief power at court was in the hands of Cao Shuang. Sima Yi was given the honourable title of Grand Tutor 太傅, but was not encouraged to play any substantial role in government, and he concentrated rather upon military enterprises. Unlike his father and grandfather, Cao Rui had taken no part in such matters, Cao Fang was too young to do so, while Cao Shuang recorded only one campaign – and that unsuccessful – against the frontier of Shu-Han. Sima Yi, by contrast, was a distinguished commander, with wide support in the army and among men of good family outside the circle of the court.

In the cultural history of China, the Zhengshi 正始 reign period from 240 to 249, the time of Cao Shuang's regency, was a moment of intellectual brilliance when the tradition of Confucianism, almost exhausted by the sterilities of Han, was revived for a time under the influence of Taoism and in particular by association with *xuanxue* 玄學 'the Study of the Mysteries'. Among the leaders of the school were He Yan 何晏, a close associate of Cao Shuang, and his friend Wang Bi 王弼, one of the greatest interpreters of the Book of Changes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² On this campaign see Fang, *Chronicle* 1, pp.569–75, 585–98; Gardiner, "Kung-sun warlords," part 2, pp.165–73.

¹⁰³ On this campaign see the biography of Guanqiu Jian in SGZ 28/Wei 28, 762; K. H. J. Gardiner, *The early history of Korea: the historical development of the peninsula up to the introduction of Buddhism in the fourth century AD* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1969), p.34. There is an account of the state of Koguryō in SGZ 30/Wei 30, 843–6.

¹⁰⁴ The account of the people of Wo 倭 in SGZ 30/Wei 30, 854–58, has been translated by Tsunoda Ryūsaku, *Japan in the Chinese dynastic histories: Later Han through Ming dynasties*, ed. L. Carrington Goodrich (South Pasadena: P.D. and Lone Perkins, 1951), pp.8–20 (the embassies from Queen Pimiko are detailed at 857–8; Tsunoda, pp.14–16).

¹⁰⁵ The annals/biography of Cao Fang (231–274), known to posterity as the Fei 'deposed' Emperor, or as Prince of Qi, the title he held before and after his reign, are in SGZ 4/Wei 4. His origins are discussed at 117 and PC n.1 quoting the *Weishi chunqiu* by Sun Sheng of the fourth century.

The biography of Cao Shuang (d. 249) is in SGZ 9/Wei 9. On plans and manoeuvres of this time see Fang, *Chronicle* 1, pp.582–3.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, Paul Demiéville, "Philosophy and Religion from Han to Sui," with Postscript by Timothy Barrett, in CC 1, pp.808–78, at 828–32; Etienne Balazs, "Nihilistic Revolt or Mystical Escapism: currents of thought in China during the third century AD," in *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy*, 226–254 (first published as "Entre révolte nihiliste et evasion mystique: les courants intellectuels en Chine au III^e siècle de notre ère," *Etudes asiatiques* 2 [1948]: 27–55); Howard L. Goodman, "Exegetes and exegeses of the Book of Changes in the third century: historical and scholastic contexts for Wang Pi," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1985). There is an short account of Wang Bi (226–249) and an extended quotation from his biography compiled by He Shao (d. 301) in SGZ 28/Wei 28, 795 and 795–6 PC.

An account of He Yan (d. 249) is attached to the biography of Cao Shuang at SGZ 9/Wei 9, 292–3 and PC. He Yan's father was a nephew of the former Empress He, consort of Emperor Ling of Han, and He /OVER

/Yan married his step-sister, a daughter of Cao Cao. There are several anecdotes concerning him in *Shishuo xinyu*: see Richard B. Mather, transl., *Shih-shuo hsün-yü: a new account of tales of the world, by Liu I-ch'ing, with commentary by Liu Chün* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), pp.523–4. (Though I would not regard *Shishuo xinyu* as an authoritative historical source, the collection does reflect the manner in which the society of that time was remembered.)

¹⁰⁷ The formula of the Five Minerals Powder (*wushi san*) included calcium from ground stalactites and aconite. It was also known as "Cold-eating Powder" (*banshi san* 寒食散), because one of its effects was to make the addict feverish, so that he sought to eat cold foods and generally wore light clothing or none at all; see Rudolph G. Wagner, "Lebenstil und Drogen im chinesischen Mittelalter," *Toung Pao* 59 (1973): 79–178, at 110–12. On He Yan's addiction see *Shishuo xinyu* 2,6; Mather, *New account*, p.36. The excesses of 'liberation and attainment', which may also have included ostentatious homosexuality, are described in the *Baopu zi* of Ge Hong and discussed by Jay Sailey, *The master who embraces simplicity: a study of the philosopher Ko Hung, AD 283–343* (Taipei: Chinese Materials Center, 1977), pp.419–32.

¹⁰⁸ The biographies of Ruan Ji (210–263) and of Xi Kang (223–262), whose surname is also transcribed as Ji, are in *JS* 49. On the Seven Sages see Balazs, "Nihilistic revolt"; also Holzman, "Sept sages," *Lavie et la pensée de Hi Kang (223–262 ap.J.C.)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1957), and *Poetry and politics: the life and works of Juan Chi AD 210–263*, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1976). At p.81 of this last work, Holzman discusses the friendship of Ruan Ji, Xi Kang, and the general "group, real or imaginary, of free-living intellectuals." He observes, however, that "the individual Seven Sages' political and even intellectual allegiance is hard to pin down with any precision" and it is not possible to group them as supporters of the Cao court or of Sima Yi. Xi Kang, however, was regarded as a personal political foe by Zhong Hui, a close associate of Sima Zhao, who had Xi Kang executed on charges of treachery and lack of filial piety (Balazs, "Nihilistic revolt," pp.241–2).

The social attitudes and personal conduct of this group of intellectuals and scholars, however, though fitting with the freedom of their philosophical attitudes, did not win wide approval or respect. He Yan, who had been brought up at court after his mother became a concubine of Cao Cao, was elegant and arrogant, a scholar of the *Laozi*, brilliant in the repartee and dialectic of 'pure conversation' (*qingtang* 清談). As a member of the imperial secretariat under Cao Shuang, he had considerable influence on official appointments and brought many of his colleagues to court. He had a reputation, however, as a libertine, and he and his associates were devotees of the ecstatic drug known as the Five Minerals Powder 五石散.¹⁰⁷

In many respects, the attitude of He Yan and his friends reflected the ideals of 'spontaneity' and going 'beyond the bounds' followed by their contemporaries Ruan Ji 阮籍, Xi Kang 嵇康 and other Sages of the Bamboo Grove 竹林七賢.¹⁰⁸ These men, of good background and great talent, represented a movement which sought to avoid meaningless formality, and which was deliberately opposed to the traditions accepted by standard Confucianists.¹⁰⁹ The attitudes of He Yan and his associates can be readily understood in the context of the society of their time, but their conduct was exaggerated both in reality and in the propaganda of their enemies. In political terms, He Yan appears to have been the only member of the group interested in substantial office, but Cao Shuang and all the court were affected by his reputation.¹¹⁰ In the earlier years of Wei, the literary life of the capital had added lustre and authority to the new regime. Now, in a sad reversal, the excesses attributed to He Yan and his clique had become an embarrassment, and Sima Yi was able to present himself as the representative of men of good family who sought Confucian reform, morality and restraint in politics and society.

In 247, as Cao Shuang and his associates introduced a number of administrative and legal changes, presumably designed to enhance the central power which they held, Sima Yi, feigning illness, retired ostensibly from public life. At the beginning of 249, however, as the emperor and Cao Shuang were on a visit to the dynastic tombs outside Luoyang, Sima Yi gathered troops for a coup d'état, seized the party and massacred Cao Shuang, his colleagues and their kinsmen. From this time on, the state of Wei was in the hands of the Sima family.

Two years after the coup, in 251, Sima Yi died, leaving his position to his eldest son, Sima Shi 司馬師, then forty years old.¹¹¹ Sima Shi embarked on a series of raids and campaigns against Wu and against the non-Chinese people of the north, but he achieved no breakthrough, and by 254 the emperor and supporters of the Cao family were threatening his authority. Sima Shi, however, struck first, deposed Cao Fang, and set his cousin Cao Mao 曹髦 on the throne in his stead.¹¹²

In the following year, 255, the general Guanqiu Jian and other supporters of the dynasty seized the city of Shouchun and sought help from Wu.¹¹³ The

southerners, however, were unable to provide assistance, and Sima Shi destroyed the rebels. Soon afterwards, on 23 March, Sima Shi died, but he was succeeded by his younger brother Sima Zhao 司馬昭, and the clan's hold on power was not disrupted.¹¹⁴ In 257 another general of Wei, Zhuge Tan 諸葛誕, rebelled at Shouchun and also sought support from the south, but the city was recaptured in the following year and the northern hold on the line of the Huai was confirmed.¹¹⁵

In 260, there was one further conspiracy to preserve the dynasty, in which the twenty-year-old Emperor took a leading role, but it was put down in a short skirmish, and Cao Mao was killed in the fighting.¹¹⁶ He was replaced by the last in the line of puppets, Cao Huan 曹奂,¹¹⁷ and Sima Zhao could now concentrate upon the conquest of Shu-Han. By 264, victory in the west was complete, and Sima Zhao took title as King of Jin. In the autumn of the following year Sima Zhao died, but he was succeeded by his eldest son Sima Yan 司馬炎, then thirty years old. That winter, on 4 February 266, in a manner reminiscent of Cao Pi's accession forty-five years before, Sima Yan received the abdication of Cao Huan and took the imperial title for himself.¹¹⁸

The final triumph of Wei over Shu-Han, therefore, also brought the overthrow of the Cao family and its replacement by the Jin dynasty of Sima Yan. The victory could perhaps have come earlier, for the northern state was always more powerful than its rivals, while Shu-Han, after the death of Zhuge Liang, did not maintain an effective government, and Wu also suffered dissension following the long reign of Sun Quan. In similar fashion, however, the weakness of the central government of Wei after the death of Cao Pi, and the conflict which accompanied the rise to power of Sima Yi and his family, prevented the government from taking proper advantage of the disorder in its rivals' camps.

Even before the conquest of Shu-Han, however, the record of Wei was impressive. In the north-east, Cao Cao had broken the Wuhuan confederacy, Sima Yi conquered Gongsun Yuan, and Guanqiu Jian destroyed Koguryō and extended Chinese authority well beyond the frontier. In the west, Cao Cao had settled the Wei River valley by his victory at Huayin,¹¹⁹ Cao Pi received embassies from central Asia and re-established some form of protectorate,¹²⁰ and Xu Miao 徐邈, the Inspector 刺史 of Liang province, confirmed control in the region south of the Ordos.¹²¹

The restoration of imperial frontiers along the north, however, was limited by weaknesses in the Chinese position which had developed earlier, and by a natural lack of confidence on the part of the central government in the distance over which it could exercise control. In this respect, though Gongsun Yuan in Manchuria had established considerable authority beyond the frontiers of Later Han, Sima Yi did not build on that achievement, but encouraged and enforced the withdrawal of Chinese settlers. The military campaigns in the north-east had been pursued with energy, but the net result was a vacuum on the frontier which gave non-Chinese peoples, notably the

¹⁰⁹ Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, pp.75–80, especially pp.82–7, where he analyses the debate in letters between Ruan Ji and a conservative Confucianist, Fu Yi.

¹¹⁰ Balazs, "Nihilistic revolt," pp.234–5, and Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, pp.13–14, discuss the slanderous propaganda presented by the Sima faction against Cao Shuang and He Yan.

¹¹¹ The biography of Sima Shi (208–255), posthumously honoured as Emperor Jing of Jin, is in *JS* 2.

¹¹² The annals/biography of Cao Mao (241–260), known to posterity by his earlier title, Duke of Gaogui District, are in *SGZ* 4/Wei 4. He was a grandson of Cao Pi, and thus first cousin once removed, in an elder generation, to Cao Fang.

¹¹³ An account of the rebellion of Guanqiu Jian is in *SGZ* 28/Wei 28, 763–6; Fang, *Chronicle* 2, pp.190–6 and 203–23.

¹¹⁴ The biography of Sima Zhao (211–265), posthumously honoured as Emperor Wen of Jin, is in *JS* 2.

¹¹⁵ The biography of Zhuge Dan (d. 258) is in *SGZ* 28/Wei 28.

¹¹⁶ The attempted coup and the death of Cao Mao are described in *ZZTJ* 77, 2453–4; Fang, *Chronicle* 2, pp.335–6.

¹¹⁷ The annals/biography of Cao Huan (245–302), known to posterity as Emperor Yuan, are in *SGZ* 4/Wei 4. Cao Huan was a grandson of Cao Cao, and thus a cousin two generations senior to Cao Mao. His original personal name was Huang 璜, but it was changed to avoid complications of taboo: *SGZ* 4/Wei 4, 147; Fang, *Chronicle* 2, p.354.

¹¹⁸ The annals of Sima Yan (236–90), posthumously honoured as Emperor Wu, are in *JS* 2; the ceremony of abdication and accession is described at 50–1.

¹¹⁹ See note 26 above.

¹²⁰ The annals of *SGZ* 2/Wei 2, 79; Fang, *Chronicle* 1, p.98, record the arrival of envoys from Shanshan, Kucha and Khotan at the court of Cao Pi in 222, and the appointment of a Colonel for the Western Regions, on the same model as Han (see, for example, Yü, "Han foreign relations," *CC* 1, pp.415–18). Such embassies, of course, were useful propaganda for the new regime, and the envoys may have been no more than enterprising merchants. The trade /OVER

/routes were surely maintained, but it is unlikely the protectorate was very effective.

The lands and routes of central Asia in this period were described by the *Wei lue* of Yu Huan in the middle of the third century, and substantial fragments of that text are preserved in SGZ 30/Wei 30, 858–62 PC.

¹²¹ The biography of Xu Miao (172–249) is in SGZ 27/Wei 27. His achievements in the north-west are described at 739–40; Fang, *Chronicle* 1, pp.274–5.

¹²² Gardiner, "Kung-sun warlords," part 2, pp.173–6, and *Early history of Korea*, p.37. On the Xianbi, the Murong clan and the early Murong state see Gerhard Schreiber, "Das Volk der Hsien-pi zur Han-Zeit," *Monumenta Serica* 12 (1947): 145–203, and "The history of the Former Yen Dynasty (285–370)," *Monumenta Serica* 14 (1949–55): 374–480; 15 (1956): 1–141.

¹²³ See HHS 89/79, 2965, SGZ 1/Wei 1, 47, and JS 97, 2549; also de Crespigny, *Northern frontier*, pp.353 and 537, nn.48, 50.

Murong 慕容 clan of the Xianbi, the opportunity to develop an independent position.¹²²

More generally across the north, rebellion, warfare, raiding and a resultant emigration had removed great expanses of territory from the control of Later Han, and Cao Cao and his successors were compelled to accept the realities of the situation. Cao Cao brought the last Shanyu 單于 of the Southern Xiongnu as a hostage to his court, and established a notional administration of five divisions for the Xiongnu who acknowledged Chinese suzerainty. There was, however, no attempt to restore a Chinese presence on the ground, and the government of Wei effectively abandoned all claim to the region beyond the Ordos and the Sanggan River.¹²³ By good fortune for the Chinese, neither the Xiongnu nor the Xianbi, who now competed with them for dominance in the steppe, were sufficiently well organized to pose any immediate threat, and their endemic confusions were kept on the boil by some well-placed Chinese intrigue. The lack of a strong imperial position, however, allowed the several groups and tribes sufficient freedom to develop their own interests and build up power for the future.

Nonetheless, in formal terms the government of Wei had been remarkably successful, and the re-establishment of authority in the north laid firm foundations for the conquest of Shu-Han and Wu. The full unification, however, was achieved by the Sima family, and aside from arguments about loyalty and legitimacy, their reward was not inappropriate. Cao Cao and his son had obtained their authority from a combination of military ability and a splendid state, but after the early death of Cao Pi, Cao Rui had not taken firm command of the army. For a dynasty of marginal lineage, still close to its military origins, this was already a risk, and the suspicions of other clans about any tendency to limit their local power were only enhanced as the government sought to demonstrate its legitimacy through display rather than action. In the end, the men of good family were prepared to support the virtues and achievement of Sima Yi and his sons, whom they could identify with their own background and interests, against an imperial clan increasingly perceived as being of poor character and quality, lacking the prestige of government, and without sympathy for the true leaders of the community. The new regime of Jin would reflect their interests far better.

未知究竟如何且看下文分解

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